Developing a narrative of worth through participation in critical youth program in Wilmington, Delaware

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ABSTRACT

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Positive relationships and having a counterspace can help marginalized youth develop a more positive sense of self and their lives as well as encourage them to promote justice in society. Challenging the youth with an employment program can help them create beneficial goals for their lives and work towards the benefit of others. The purpose of this study was to find whether critical youth work can support the youth to develop a critical consciousness and willingness to fight against oppression. The research examined the Streetleaders program in the lives of marginalized youth in the city of Wilmington, Delaware, the US.

This qualitative research was built with eight open-ended interviews, collected in Wilmington during the spring of 2017 and analyzed with the method of thematic analysis. The data collection focused on the viewpoint of the former participants of the youth program on what has contributed to their marginalization and if critical youth work has helped them develop a narrative of worth and fight against the oppression of their surroundings. Critical youth work and especially the presence of positive adult figures has facilitated the process of the development of a narrative of worth in the lives of these youth, while lack of positive role models, lost sense of community, racial issues and 'negativity' in the form of violence and drug abuse have marginalized the youth in Wilmington. Transformation has happened in their lives more or less from the impact of participation in the SLP.

Keywords: narrative of worth, critical youth work, marginalized youth, power of caring, counterspace, transformation

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

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List of abbreviations

ASP	After-school program
ATL	Assistant team leader
CYW	Critical Youth Work
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SL	Streetleader
SLP	Streetleader program
TL	Team leader
UP	Urban Promise
UPW	Urban Promise Wilmington

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1   INTRODUCTION

To ensure access in quality education in primary, secondary as well as tertiary level, youth must have an access in non-formal education as well as formal (United Nations, 2015). Learning through non-formal education can give a motive for personality and identity development (Žagar & Kelava, 2014, p. x). This kind of idea of education as lifelong learning started to "gain foothold" after 1950s (Vidmar, 2014, p. 2). and refers to the "personal, social and professional development" throughout one's life, with an aim to improve life quality (ibid, p. 3). McLaren states (2007) that according to Paulo Freire, a famous Brazilian teacher and critical pedagogy theorist, teachers must "leave their seminar rooms in order to shape it" (p. 304). He continues that we need a pedagogy that connects the students' everyday life to the struggle for social justice and a space where students can think outside of capitalist values (ibid). In the current research, participation in critical youth work is regarded as a part of the non-formal education of the youth; education that happens in dialogue.

The quality and significance of non-formal education is a timely topic as it is listed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4), "Quality education for all". It is meant to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015). The SDG4 also gives a high significance to achieving literacy and numeracy for all youth, and achieving at least a "minimum proficiency level" by the end of primary and lower secondary school all (ibid). The achievement of these goals is facilitated by non-formal education and youth programs supporting school performance. In challenging contexts where youth are at elevated risk of dropping out of school, programs as well as relationships with other people that manage to give them accountability with school are highly important in working towards SDG4. They not only can be shown to support the primary education that students receive at school but they also give a safe space for learning outside of school.

In addition to ensuring and supporting quality education, non-formal education can be used for increasing peace and justice in cities, or "become a driving force in the development of society" (Žagar & Kelava, 2014, p. x). The SDGs have stepped up from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 2000-2015) by establishing a goal solely for peace and justice in the world. In other words, SDG16 is designated to reach towards safer streets and just societies. By 2030, this should be indicated by numbers such as victims of abuse, severe physical punishment, killing or homicide and how many feel safe to walk around in their neighborhood. Quality education is not only about quality learning, but also about having a safe place to learn. Non-formal education and quality youth programs can give this safe place to learn and develop outside of school, and this is especially important in neighborhoods and places where youth is at elevated risk of choosing badly; dropping out of school, ending up in prison or even dead. The current thesis attempts to show how youth's access to recognition, connectedness and a safe environment and community outside of school are highly important in working towards SDG4 and SDG16.

Youth development cooperation planned to support education is needed in the United States of America. The SDGs are decided by the United Nations General Assembly and relevant all over the world, including the USA. In the US, the challenges encompass violence and crime epidemics such as in Wilmington, Delaware. Where children grow up constantly witnessing gun violence and drug abuse, suffering from the absence of one or both parents, lacking recognition and connectedness, seeking attention and comfort in gangs, drugs or casual sex, they often grow up without a vision. Growing up without a vision of a different future for themselves increases the violence and abuse that is already a problem. Corporal policeman Geiser stated to a Newsweek reporter how children as young as 4 years old hold up their hands in the shape of a gun at them while they drive around (Jones, 2014). He says that they may be playing, however, they most probably are kids who "only see one side of life" (ibid). Therefore, collaboration to support marginalized children and youth is very much needed and justified in such places.

This thesis shows how a youth employment program affects young people and their life goals and allows and encourages them to develop a counter narrative of worth. I conducted the data collection while interning for Urban Promise Wilmington (UPW) in Wilmington, Delaware for 5,5 months in early 2017. Firstly, I had a grandstand view of the challenges that young children and teenagers face in the inner cities of modern-day America. It was eye-opening to watch them struggle with issues rising from both coming from an ethnic minority and coming from a crime-infested neighborhood. Secondly, I had a chance to follow the busy days of youth workers committed to the youth of their city. They did not merely fulfill the duties of their job descriptions, but spent additional time with the children and youth on a weekly basis to support positive identity work and develop meaningful, guiding relationships with them for them to realize their own potential and pursue higher goals in life. I witnessed peaceful and meaningful interaction between different ethnicities. This experience made me believe in the possibilities of purposeful, committed critical youth work and see its results in the young adults graduated from the program.

This research examines the quality and significance of a critical youth program from the viewpoint of former participants. The study focuses on the concept of narrative of worth and therefore, the positive identity work that happens through critical youth work. Part 2 introduces the research context of Wilmington, Delaware in the east coast of the USA and the UPW as the organizational context. Part 3 dives into the concept of narrative of worth and presents how it has been shown to develop through having a counterspace such as a critical youth program. The implementation of the study, the data collection and the analysis are explained in part 4, the findings are examined in part 5 and a discussion of the findings can be found in part 5. All in all, this study gives suggestive evidence of the effect of critical youth work in the development of a narrative of worth in young people and provides a starting point for several further research opportunities.

2   RESEARCH CONTEXT

2.1   Wilmington, Delaware

> It's so sad because.. that's the crazy part 'bout livin' 'round here.. all these deaths all these murders are from people you grew up with.. like ya'll killin' each other an' ya'll mom and dad know each other (I3)

My 2017 internship site UPW was situated in Wilmington, Delaware. Wilmington is a town with a population of about 70 000 located in Delaware, a state next to Pennsylvania and New Jersey on the east coast of the United States. Wilmington is a town often ranked high in crime and violence (Wilmington Shootings, 2017) and has got itself a nickname of "Murder Town" (Jones, 2014). It has twice been ranked as the most violent city of comparable size in the US, in 2012 and 2014 (ibid; Ruzanic, 2017). The crime affects poverty-stricken African-American young males "disproportionately", according to Jones (2014). Indeed, according to the Wilmington Re-entry Service Center (as quoted by Ruzanic, 2017), as more than 1000 ex-offenders are released from Delaware prisons into three Wilmington zip codes 19801, 19802 and 19805 - areas where Urban Promise Wilmington is located and offers programs - more than half or 7,200 out of the 14,000 men over 18 years old in these zip code areas are on probation (ibid). Ruzanic states (ibid) that the rate of violence in Wilmington is four times the national average. During my internship in UPW, the street where I stayed in a staff house on the Eastside was closed off 3 times due to shootings, and in one of these a 17-year-old girl was shot dead. Additionally, most of the partakers in our after-school program had either witnessed a shooting, had a family member in prison for crimes related to gun violence, other type of violence or drug abuse.

It is far from easy to be a police officer in Wilmington, DE, and there is hardly any cooperation between the people and the police force. In 2014, the city was short almost 30 police officers, says mayor Williams, so there is a lack of work force in the area (Jones, 2014). She states that the people need to cooperate with the police, which is not happening now (ibid). While patrolling

Wilmington with the local police, Jones states how a young man mouthed "fuck you" at the police car and additionally, how the police officer tells a story of a 4-year-old held up his hand at them "in the shape of a gun" (ibid). The officer states that only 15 % of homicides in the area have been solved, because people do not talk and cooperate with the police. In addition, Jones represents Coley Harris, someone who grew up in Wilmington, became a drug dealer and ended up in prison for murder. After having his life turned around and now working for steering people away from violence, Harris states that the young people are unwell and even dangerous largely because of problems with drugs (ibid). He thinks that "people or circumstances" can guide you in a better direction (ibid).

The violence epidemic of inner cities in the US has not gone unnoticed by the media. Newspapers have keenly reported on how Donald Trump, the president of the United States of America elected in 2016, has talked about the struggle in the inner cities and has expressed his concern for the ethnic minority communities of the country. Fortune magazine reveals that while a candidate, he stated that African American as well as Hispanic communities in inner cities in the US are "living in hell" and "are being decimated by crime" (Chan, 2016). While running for president, Trump's words for describing the challenge in many inner cities were: "Look, it is a disaster the way African-Americans are living… We'll get rid of the crime. You'll be able to walk down the street without getting shot. Right now, you walk down the street, you get shot" (Trump, 2016, as quoted by Epstein & Bender, 2016). Moreover, Trump was claimed to have said that the African American community is "absolutely in the worst shape that they've ever been before" (Reilly, 2016). Johnson writes (2016) how president Trump has also described the inner cities with mostly African American and Hispanic population, that are minorities in the United States, as "more dangerous than war zones" and promised that he will "straighten it out". Therefore, the struggle of the inner cities is an issue addressed by the President on many occasions and reported in the media. This research examines how youth programs and investment in positive identity work of the youth can be a part in this process of working towards safer streets.

2.2   Urban Promise Wilmington and the 'Streetleaders' program

Urban Promise Wilmington (UPW) is a non-profit organization working among the youth of this city with a vision to transform the lives of the local teenagers and children. UPW was founded by Robert Prestowitz in 1998, while the first Urban Promise site had been established by Bruce Main in Camden, New Jersey 10 years prior (Hicks & Main, 2008). Other Urban Promise programs are offered in Toronto, Canada and in Honduras, for example. Through its programs and ministries that are run by Christian values and basis, the goal of UP is to equip the youth with "skills necessary to academic achievement, life management, personal growth and servant leadership" (Urban Promise Wilmington 2017), the last referring to the biblical model of leadership as a service to those around you and prioritizing others before yourself. Apart from the Urban Promise elementary school and high school or the "Academy", the goals are achieved through programs such as the Streetleaders (SLP), After-School Programs (ASPs), Sports Ministry and Summer Camps.

The SLP employs teenagers aged from 14 to 18 to work in the ASPs together with the director and the team. The teenagers are required to attend weekly tutoring and mentoring and adult companionship is available for them when needed. The first former Streetleader to graduate from college was James Whitely in 2009; 11 years after founding UPW. According to the UPW website (2017), the teenagers work as counselors, teachers and role models to the children, and are offered job training, leadership development, tutoring, mentoring, employment and college preparation. They also take part in tours around colleges and preparation for their Scholastic Aptitude tests (SATs) in addition to "trips (camping, fishing, nearby cities) and peer events (formal dinners, lock-ins and more)". Therefore, the SLP is meant to be a holistic experience where the teenagers have a safe place to spend their time as well as develop professionally and gain positive experience.

Participation in after-school programs can reduce the risk of initiating drug abuse or engage in sexual activity in early teen years as well as improve academic performance (Heckman, 2006; Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010).

Durlak et al. (2010) did research of 68 different studies of after-school programs in at least 43 of which more than 90% of the participants were of ethnic minorities. Their results indicated that after-school programs have "an overall positive and statistically significant impact on participating youth" (p. 298). Durlak et al. state (2010) that youth that participate in these programs have an increased academic performance, feel better about themselves or have a higher self-esteem and reduced tendency of problem behavior. In addition, connecting with caring adults and participating in meaningful activities in organized after-school programs "can help youth develop and apply new skills and personal talents" (Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Mahoney, Parente & Zigler, 2010; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; as cited in Durlak et al., 2010).

3   THE NARRATIVE OF WORTH OF MARGINALIZED YOUTH THROUGH CRITICAL YOUTH WORK

A youth program as a counterspace can be very significant for positive identity work of the youth. Non-formal education in critical youth work in challenging contexts not only supports the achievement of SDG4 and SDG16, but also creates a counterspace for marginalized youth where they are able to develop a narrative of worth through the presence of strategic others and power of caring. The current chapter examines these concepts in detail and presents existing research and evidence of the topic. Firstly, the term 'marginalized youth' is explained in general as well as what is meant by it in the current context. Secondly, critical youth work (CYW) is examined with a side note of critical pedagogy, since many characteristics of CYW have their roots in the critical pedagogy theory. Thirdly, the chapter delves into the idea of a narrative of worth and how its development is facilitated by a counterspace or presence of strategic others and power of caring. A side note is made of the influence of religion on the narrative of worth. Fourthly, and lastly, the concept of

transformation is explained to better help understand the vision and work strategy of UPW and give background for the further ideas of the study participants.

3.1   Marginalized youth

The SLP is primarily directed to the local marginalized youth. To explain the concept, it is important to note that it differs from perhaps the more commonly used 'youth at risk'. In line with Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo's definition (2013), the term 'youth at risk' is often used in a mixed way to talk about the individual and social ills that contribute to the risk, but the term 'marginalized youth' rather is used to discuss what is wrong in "the social economic and cultural structures" (p. 1698). In other words, the focus is on what has marginalized them or what has driven them to the corner; as McLaren (2007, p. 189) discusses the "asymmetrical relations of power based on specific race, class and gender" that underlie in the education in North America. He points out (2007) that numerous theorists have argued that American education has failed in equality and benefits the capitalists economically rather than providing opportunities for students "to become empowered as critical, active citizens" (ibid).

In Wilmington, 56.5 % of the population is ethnically African American and 11.5 % ethnically Hispanic, hence more than half of the own's citizens belong to ethnic minorities in the US (Jones, 2014; Race and Ethnicity in Wilmington, 2017). Many of the families of the children that UPW offers the ASPs for are either affected by divorce, break-ups, family members in jail, or aunts or grandmothers raising the children. Peter McLaren's experiences from being a teacher in an inner-city school in Canada were similar; he stated that more than 50% of the fourth graders that he was teaching came from "single-parent families who lived below the poverty line" (2007, p. 127). In Wilmington, DE, unemployment is twice as high as the state average and in many of the neighborhoods where UPW works three times as high (Ruzanic 2017). The result is that youth from ethnic minorities or poor socioeconomic backgrounds

drop out of school more often, do not go to college more often and turn to crime more often. McLaren quoted his friend Jim Montgomerie who said that these kids "pick on the whole damn community because they feel so trapped in their own situation" (2007, p. 127).

In Wilmington, DE, the majority of partakers in the ASPs and the SLP are marginalized not only racially but also economically. A research conducted in the University of Delaware states that between 2009 and 2013, Wilmington had a poverty rate of 23.9 %; twice the statewide rate (University of Delaware, 2015). The African American and Hispanic minorities in Wilmington are twice or three times more likely to suffer from poverty in the area than the white or Asian population (ibid). In all of Delaware, female households with children under the age of 18 hold a poverty rate of 29.9 %, whereas taking all families into account, this number is only 7.8 % (ibid). It was also found out in the research by UD that "poverty rates for individuals are particularly high within census tracts in Wilmington and range between 40% and 69%" (ibid). At the same time, the town is a home for DuPont, "one of the largest chemical companies in the world" and one of the richest families in the US (Ruzanic, 2017). The median household income has a $100,000 difference between the richest and the poorest neighborhoods (ibid). Therefore, the gap between the rich and privileged and the poor and disadvantaged is huge.

The poverty together with a high rate of violence and drug abuse in Wilmington have partially caused high dropout rates from school. In the Eastside, where UPW has two after-school sites, the high school dropout rate is more than 30% and in Southbridge, where I worked for Camp Hope, the rate is almost 40% (Ruzanic, 2017). The overall high school graduation rate in Wilmington was 81.40 % in 2013 (Open Data Network, 2013). The UPW after-school programs give a high importance for homework and every day about 1/3 of camp time is reserved for completing homework (and even more if needed). Additionally, the ASP's have a special Level-up time once a week for improving e.g. math and reading skills, and there are special events such as the Speech Contest and Spelling Bee, where the partakers in both ASP's and the SL

program are challenged to improve their spelling and writing skills as well as get up on stage and speak in front of people. Moreover, the SL employment program requires its employees to keep receiving good grades at school and they are also required to attend weekly tutoring. Therefore, UPW also works to support the academic performance of these children and youth and prompts achievement.

3.2   Non-formal education and critical youth work

The programs of UPW constitute the critical youth work they do in Wilmington, DE, and they are largely based on the ideas of critical pedagogy theory. In the SLP, the SLs take part in non-formal education that can be described as education that takes place in dialogue rather than focusing on a curriculum. For Paulo Freire, dialogue is a focus of his critical pedagogy theory. To him, education is something that happens in a "situation in which both (teacher and student) address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated" (1970; 1996, p. 74). In other words, to critical pedagogy education is often concerned with dialogue, posing problems and giving a voice to who has no voice. Freire said that instead of A teaching B or A for B, should be A *with* B, and education instead of depositing knowledge is actually the "organized, systematized, and developed "re-presentation" to individuals of the things about which they want to know more" (ibid). Henry Giroux's idea (McLaren, 2007, p. 192) of a "public pedagogy" is very close to the idea of education and pedagogy planned and conducted by UPW, as it is "designed to help students invest in public life" and to locate themselves socially and in the public discourse. Most importantly to the current research, critical pedagogy is committed to ways of learning "undertaken in solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups" (McLaren, 2007, p. 190).

What are the practical differences between formal and non-formal education? Both are about acquiring knowledge and learning, assimilating information, and they occur through personal reflection, reconstruction and social interaction", however the settings are usually different (Cedefop, 2004,

European Commission, 2006a; as cited in Žagar & Kelava, 2014, p. ix). The two are connected as they can be the basis for each other, can work as a "trigger for development" or the non-formal education of professionals such as teachers can help others' formal education (2014, p. x). Non-formal education, therefore, refers to lifelong learning and learning outside of the school-setting, and in the current research especially to the participation in youth work and employment program and the education and learning that happens through it.

Education, formal or non-formal, is a tool for transformation. Therefore, it does not mean schooling or "a mode of social control", but it is a tool where subjects commit to "self and social transformation" (McLaren 2007, p. 193). Žagar & Kelava focus (2014) on the concepts of learning and knowledge when analyzing education. John Dewey said (Neill, J., 2005) that life itself is education. According to a definition by the Oxford English dictionary, education refers to "the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university" (2016). Therefore, through the systematic instruction and commitment to social transformation, the SLP not only supports the young people's school performance, but also supports their overall lifelong learning.

Critical youth work is a concept deriving from the theory of critical pedagogy. It is concerned with healing, with repairing and transforming; committing "to the side of the oppressed" (McLaren 2007, p. 186). According to Borden, Schlomer and Bragamonte Wiggs (2011), the aim or expectation for youth work is to help the youth in the program develop positively. Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo describe (2013) critical youth work with a "dual focus"; that it is done for "the individual psychosocial development on the one hand, and collective critical consciousness and the promotion of social justice on the other" (ibid, p. 1698). The viewpoint here is that the factors that marginalize young people are social; that they are socially excluded or oppressed or that their resources are limited and they do not have enough or good-enough role models in their lives (ibid). The marginalizing social factors in Wilmington were described earlier and include the problems of high poverty, crime and drug

abuse rates that create an atmosphere of hopelessness and purposelessness. Critical youth work believes that the youth need to feel connectedness and recognition (ibid). While Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo do not explain these concepts further, Oxford English dictionary defines 'connectedness' as "a feeling a belonging to or having affinity with a particular person or a group" and recognition as "acknowledgement of the existence, validity, or legality of something" or alternatively "appreciation" (2017).

The role of youth work in the US is not the same as it used to be and even the role of youth workers has become more holistic and serious in the lives of the targeted youth (Borden et al., 2011). Youth programs such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) have been in progress since as far back as 1856. Since then, youth programs as such have developed into "external support systems" in young people's lives and continue to do so. In the context of a program such as the SLP, a young person can develop life skills, have positive relationships with strategic others such as adults and peers and take part in activities that aim for their positive, holistic development, instead of spending time on the streets in non-worthwhile ventures (ibid). Youth programs have changed from playgrounds to educational, meaningful environments involving mentoring, community building and professional, experienced and caring youth workers.

Critical youth programs can facilitate the identity formation of the youth. As Clausen (1986) describes adolescence and early adulthood, it is a phase of life when identity becomes more focused on values that one wants to commit to, the activities that one prefers and that are engaging to one as well as people who are the most important. Therefore, as the development of identity is the most significant task of these years (ibid), critical youth programs can really help and support the adolescents in achieving "a clear sense of who one is", especially in challenging contexts such as the current one (ibid, p. 101). People who find activities that deeply satisfy them in early life are much more likely to have "more stable life patterns" than those who do not (ibid, p. 102). If the youth goes through adolescence and early adulthood without adequate support

and guidance, it can take them a much longer time to know themselves and therefore figure out to what they want to devote their lives.

3.3 Developing a narrative of worth

3.3.1 (Counter) Narrative of worth

Everyone has a "basic need for story"; a narrative that we use to view as well as review our existence and experiences (Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Denman, 1991, as cited by Gay, 2000, p. 2). Thus, the goal of the Streetleader program is to maintain a counter narrative for the youth in the community. This is a term that can be linked firstly to Freire's *conscientizacao* or "critical consciousness" (2005; 1993, as quoted by Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013) and secondly to Maslow's theory of self-actualization and transcendence (1943; Huitt, 2007). Therefore, first, according to Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo, this critical consciousness perceives and interrogates the "various forms of oppression" that have an impact on the local youth's lives and that takes "collective action against the status quo" (2013, p. 1701). A narrative of worth grows from what possibly used to be a deficit and avoids a "narrative of criminality" (ibid). In addition, Freire points out (2005) that it "must grow out of a critical educational effort" rather than merely emerging because of an economic change, for example (p. 15).

This consciousness is used when directly interacting with the youth in the area to support their "positive identity work" and in addition, encountering professionals who are potential advocates for the youth (2013, p. 1701). What Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo emphasize is the importance of encouraging the "personal development" of the youth when replacing the narrative of deficit that is deep in marginalized groups (ibid). Critical youth work that aims for a narrative of worth maintains "distinct and ongoing efforts to allow the youth determine the depth and pace of the disclosure of their stories" and for the incorporation of damaging behavior in a "complex story using new and contextualized perspective" (ibid). This study shows both what the importance

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of such programs is for the youth as well as what the deficits are and what can be improved.

Second, Abraham Maslow's self-actualization can be regarded a part of the process of developing a narrative of worth. Maslow suggested (Huitt, 2007) that we become wiser and more aware of what to do and how to act in different situations, when we grow closer to being self-actualized and therefore reach the highest level of the hierarchy of human needs; a widely accepted and appreciated theory that he already published over 60 years ago. Self-actualization refers to firstly finding self-fulfillment in life and realizing one's own potential, and secondly, in the counterpart level of transcendence, to help others do the same (Huitt, 2007). Ngai, Cheung, Yuan and Lin (2016) found out that self-actualization had a positive effect on motivation to work among unemployed youth who were financially dependent on their parents. According to their research, self-actualization "represents an instance of empowerment (as opposed to oppression or alienation) from realizing one's potentialities and talents" and that people who have developed a higher perception of self-worth are more likely to recognize and understand "personal needs and desires" as well as to "take an active stance against stress" (Ngai et al., 2016, p. 158).

Developing a narrative of worth is an important part of what UPW aims to achieve in Wilmington, DE. The UPW organizational vision is "to be a community in Christ of servant leadership and transformation, seeking a full life for all involved: urban youth, families, volunteers and staff in the neighborhoods of our city" (2017). According to the Oxford English dictionary, the definition of transformation is "a marked change in form, nature or appearance" (2017). Taking this to the sociological level, youth development and the study context of the SLP of UPW, the expectation is to see the youth working towards their plans and goals for their lives, instead of accepting the oppression around them and accepting to stay marginalized and thus victims. All in all, the UPW goal and idea of transformation is based on the theories of narrative of worth and self-actualization; coming from a place of oppression to

realizing one's potential to act against it and making it into reality. This is especially important in the marginalized groups, because once a person goes through transformation, he or she uses a new, considered perspective in life instead of the old one that accepts being marginalized.

3.3.2 Promoting social justice

Social justice represents values that are shared in a society and that minimize any social conflicts, and it "contributes to the continuation of productive interactions among people" (Ritzer, 2005, p. 601). It creates and maintains social harmony and can "act as a mechanism for resolving social conflicts" (ibid). In addition, Smyth (2011, p. 53) talks about "social responsibility" and working towards the students or youth "acting in socially critical ways". He states (ibid) that this is significant in "creating a counter-hegemonic resistance to neo-liberalism". A society is a field where conflict and competition sometimes happens, and many times they take place over and argument over doxa or what is taken granted in the field (Waqcuant 1995; Pyykkönen, 2015). These are often based on the different forms of capital that individuals or groups struggle over and divisions are caused (ibid). A just society, therefore, works towards minimizing these struggles and working towards positive outcomes for all. Waqcuant notes (1995) that through the struggles the forms of capital may change as well as structurally modify the field. The struggling inner cities such as Wilmington, DE, lack in social justice as the conflicts with violence, crime and drug abuse continue. Encounters of between people of various positions, tendencies and ethnicities that still involve prejudice (Waqcuant 2015; Gay, 2000). Critical youth work aims to lessen the effect of these on the youth and to be the voice for them where they are at risk of being involved in these conflicts.

Growing to promote social justice is a part of the development of a narrative of worth. This is closely linked to Maslow's idea of transcendence or moving the acquired knowledge to benefit another person. Critical theorists support the idea of a counter narrative by being dedicated to the necessities of "self-empowerment and social transformation" (McLaren, 2007, p. 190). Freire

(1970, p. 30) states that in order to develop a pedagogy of liberation, the oppressed need "to be "hosts" of the oppressor". The need to "unveil the world of oppression" and commit to its transformation (1970, p. 36). Critical pedagogy does not restrict this in the classroom environment but stresses that any real pedagogical custom "demands a commitment to social transformation in solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups" (2007, p. 189) and that the role of the teachers and youth workers is a social one rather than individual (Smyth, 2011). Therefore, the idea of a counter narrative of worth is deeply rooted in critical pedagogy theory and somehow intertwined with it. It can be argued that programs developed for youth such as SLP facilitate and support the process of them becoming critical thinkers and seeing themselves more through a narrative of worth instead of deficit.

This marginalized youth is at risk because the oppressive society they live in push them towards a narrative of deficit. Social injustice often involves a multiplicity of oppressions; dominant and dominated groups and individuals (Ritzer, 2005). The dominated group often possess very little of either cultural or economic capital (Waqcuant 2015; Nash 1990) and Bourdieu says that the "dominated classes intervene in the symbolic struggles to appropriate the distinctive properties" (1984, p. 248). African Americans in the US have the same rights as all citizens, however they are often considered as second class (Ritzer, 2005) and this is a problem also in Wilmington, DE. Bourdieu (1995) believes that history still remains and lives in people, therefore the past issues with slavery and racial injustice could be considered a part of the current social injustice. However, the issues that marginalized youth face need to be made more visible and critical youth work can help them to transcend the marginal line.

Learning to promote social justice through developing a narrative of worth is a part of helping the youth become active and critical as citizens (McLaren, 2007). Critical youth work is "an alternative to person-centered youth work" and therefore works towards a just society (Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013, p. 1698). Teachers and youth workers play a key role here,

as they encourage the youth "to struggle for a new society outside the division of labor found within capital's social universe" (McLaren, 2007, p 187). Therefore, programs such as the SLP can work as an agency for not only self but also social empowerment (ibid). Interestingly, Lavie-Ajayi and Krumer-Nevo (2013) state that when representatives of such programs are physically present in the streets of the city, it is not only youth work but also a political stance and works towards the improvement of more than just individual lives.

3.3.3 Counterspace

Developing a narrative of worth is facilitated through participation and "presence of strategic others" and it involves adaptive responding through self-protection and enhancement of sense of self-worth (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 261). According to Case and Hunter (ibid), especially the positive development of self-worth is facilitated by participation and community of others. This can also be described as "community of resistance"; a group of people who share a narrative, understand the oppression and who are "uniquely positioned" to promote the self-worth of the participants (hooks, 1990, as quoted in Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 261). Case and Hunter point out (2012) that it is important to study the ways of how communities promote and facilitate self-enhancement to more comprehensively understand how adaptive responding happens. Organizations can also serve as empowering settings. From this viewpoint, UPW and the SLP can be seen as a safe place, alternative setting, a *counterspace*; a space where "deficit notions of people - - can be challenged and where a positive climate can be established and maintained" (Solórzano et al., 2000, as quoted by Case & Hunter, 2012, p.261).

Counterspace involves a keen sense of community. Durham (2008) states that a community is something that has "to do with change, exchange, and goods possessed by more than one person". Sense of community, in essence, involves a membership in a group. As a member of a group, one feels like they belong to the group and they have confidence about it. McMillan states (1996) that sense of community can be broken into four parts: spirit, trust, trade and

art. In his view, in order to have this sense there needs to be a "spirit of belonging together, a feeling that there is an authority structure that can be trusted, an awareness that trade, and mutual benefit come from being together and a spirit that comes from shared experiences that are preserved as art" (1996, p. 315). To keep the spirit requires trust and authority from the group, therefore, some rules are needed to keep the group together. One needs to be able to be true to himself or herself and to be able to speak honestly about themselves and to feel safe about it. In addition, McMillan emphasizes friendship and connections as a part of sense of community.

The spirit of belonging together and sense of community involve the power of caring. According to Freire (1970), the basis for dialogue is love and committing to the cause of the oppressed is an act of love. Gay argues (2000, p. 45) that caring is "a value and a moral imperative" where one is concerned in the other person's best interest. Caring is manifested in the teachers' or in the current context, camp directors' attitudes and expectations towards the SLs' "human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities" (ibid). In culturally responsive teaching, concern is given towards the participants' "psycho-emotional well-being and academic success; personal morality and social actions; obligations and celebrations; communality and individuality; and unique cultural connections and universal human bonds" (2000, p. 45-46). It provokes action, prompts achievement and empowers the participants through personal connections (p. 48-49). The current research aims to find out whether caring has been present in the former SLs' experience of the program and how it has affected the course of their lives.

Gay emphasizes the power of caring and high teacher expectations in multicultural surroundings. She (2000) argues that teacher expectations with students are often influenced by stereotypes such as Japanese students are high-achieving and obedient whereas Latinos and African Americans are low-achieving and have disciplinary issues. According to a study by Washington (1982, as cited by Gay, 2000), in elementary and secondary schools in San Francisco, teachers mostly perceived black male students "as being

uncooperative, immature and destructive" when white female students were perceived the opposite of that (2000, p. 61). These teachers' expectations for their students Gay describes as "exponential" (p. 59). As in the SLP, majority of the participants is Latino or African American and all the schools in the area are among the lowest 5% in academic performance in the country (Ruzanic, 2017), the expectations of the staff may be affected by stereotypes as well. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore what kind of expectations or empowerment SLs have experienced in the program.

3.3.4   Religion and narrative of worth

As the context of this study is openly religious and works from a religious value system, it is desirable to briefly discuss the relationship between religion and adolescent development. Religion has been found "an influential and pervasive resource" in youth development (Benson, Donahue & Erickson, 1989, as quoted by King & Furrow, 2004, p. 704) as well as religious commitment or affiliation protective against criminal or dangerous behavior, substance abuse and other risk-taking behavior (Lerner & Galambos, 1998, as quoted by King and Furrow, 2004). In many cases, religion has been found to support positive youth development, increase positive social behavior and help the youth cope with stress (King and Furrow, 2004; Van Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero & Kim, 2009). Therefore, research has shown the benefit of working with a religious affiliation towards youth development.

Even more importantly, religion can give the youth a sense of belonging to something and promote positive identity work (Furrow, King & White, 2004). Therefore, religion in this way can contribute to the development of a narrative of worth in the youth. Through religion, youth is more able to cope with negative experiences and deficit deriving from hurtful past "in a more positive light", as they feel that they have the support of God and support of a religious community around them (Van Dyke et al., 2009, p. 369). Van Dyke et al. found (2009) that there is a strong connection between positive religious coping and life satisfaction and positive sense of self. Even though the current research only

examines the religion factor in a minor scale, it is important to note that learning coping mechanisms through something such as religion contributes to the youth's self-esteem and thus help them develop a narrative of worth, from perhaps otherwise seemingly hopeless surroundings.

4   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

4.1   Research problem and questions

The outcomes of the program in the lives of the former participants is a phenomenon that is poorly understood or researched in Urban Promise Wilmington. The main function and the goal of this study is to identify reasons for the marginalization of the youth in Wilmington, Delaware, and how the SLP has helped them to develop a narrative of worth in this challenging context. Therefore, the aim is to find out ways in which a critical youth program can promote positive identity work in youth in marginalized or challenging settings. The SLP aims for transformation in the youth, a concept which is discussed in detail from the viewpoint of the participants of the study. In addition, the study aims to identify the factors that have contributed to the marginalization of the youth in Wilmington, Delaware and therefore looks for ways in which the youth program has worked as a counterspace for the marginalization and helped the youth to de-marginalize themselves.

The focus of the analysis is the viewpoint of the study participants aka former participants of the SLP. This is central to this research. The purpose of the research is to utilize the observations of the study participants to find solutions for the current phenomena and guidelines for the continuation of the SLP as well as youth programs in general. The purpose is to evaluate the SLP through a former participant viewpoint, and to identify the themes arising and compare and contrast them to each other as well as to form a dialogue between them and the theory.

The questions that the current research attempts to answer are as follows:

1.   From the participants' viewpoint, what has caused the marginalization of the youth in Wilmington, Delaware, and how has the SLP helped them to identify and interrogate the oppression?

2.   How has the SLP contributed to the former participants' narrative of worth? How has the program acted as a counterspace in the participants' lives?

3.   From the participants' viewpoint, what is the transformation that the SLP aims for?

4.2   Qualitative research

This research explores the outcomes or results of the SLP through a questionnaire and qualitative interviews of former participants, who have finished or graduated from the program within the 5 past years or from 2012 through 2016. The research employs thematic analysis to identify the key themes provided by the answers and compares these to the vision and goals of the program, as well as utilizes the theories of critical pedagogy and critical youth work to discuss the results.

Carefully conducted qualitative research is the most accurate way to study the current phenomena. In qualitative inquiry and thematic analysis, the responsibility of choosing and interpreting data is given to the researcher. For this reason, Laubschagne comments (2003) that qualitative research is something "airy fairy" or almost foreign field of research (as quoted by Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Patton points out (2015) how we as people constantly assign meaning and make sense of our experiences. A qualitative inquiry, therefore, is personal; it interprets this "meaning-making process", and the possibilities it offers are very different from those of a qualitative research. It allows one to look for patterns in human behavior and thinking and capture diverse perspectives (ibid). What is significant is to use systematic methods and be "clear and explicit" in doing research (Laubschagne, 2003).

4.3 Data collection

I conducted the data collection for the current research project between February and May in 2017. I started by reaching out to the former participants of the SLP with the UPW staff member who had previously led the program. He called the contacts, introduced me and my project and if they were willing to participate, he gave the phone to me and I could talk to the person and schedule an interview. Altogether, we reached out to 19 persons. Six had either changed their telephone number or for one reason or the other, we could not get through. Five others I was in contact with, but could not manage to do an interview, because they either did not turn up to the scheduled interview or did not follow through after multiple attempts to schedule an interview. Therefore, all in all, I interviewed eight persons for the current study; they will be referred to as I1, I2, I3, I4, I5, I6, I7 and I8 and an outline of their information is shown in the table 1.

TABLE 1. Study participants

	M/F	Interview	Interview length (min)	Years in SLP	Grad. high school	SLP grad. year	Current situation
I1	F	Feb 15 face-to-face	47:15	3	yes	2013	working & in college
I2	M	Mar 16 face-to-face	40:29	5,5	yes	2013	working, dropped out of college
I3	M	Mar 16 via phone	37:11	5	yes	2013	in college
I4	M	Mar 18 face-to-face	39:44	5	yes	2014	working, dropped out of college
I5	M	Mar 18 face-to-face	24:04	5	yes	(quit) 2016	working
I6	F	Mar 30 via phone	24:43	3	no	(quit) 2016	stay-at-home mom, in high school

I7	F	Apr 7 face-to-face	21:54	3	yes	2013	finished degree; stay-at-home mom
I8	F	May 18 face-to-face	22:15	2	yes	2016	working; dropped out of college

Even though it was planned to be used in the data analysis, the first interview was considered as a trial run or a pilot interview (Appendix 1). The interviewee was the only former participant of the program that I got to know a little bit before the interview took place. As the interview took about 45 minutes and I felt there were too many questions, the questions were modified and the number of questions was decreased afterwards (Appendix 2). However, even with the new questions the length of the interview varied from 20 to 50 minutes. Consequently, the interview part became more focused as some irrelevant questions were deleted. Especially the addition of asking about their current situation in the beginning seemed to give them a chance to start off in a relaxed manner and it added good atmosphere to the whole interview session.

By interviewing these persons, I gathered about 55 pages of raw data in transcribed interviews. A questionnaire (Appendix 3) was conducted before each interview about background characteristics such as how many years and when they worked as a Streetleader, if they went to Urban Promise school or high school, what kind of trips they took while being a Streetleader and who was their closest staff member. The questionnaire gave direction to the first questions of the interview as they were always asked to elaborate on their answers, however, some answers such as the trips remained irrelevant to the current research. The interview time shown by the table represents the time from when they finished the questionnaire that took roughly 20 minutes, to the end of the interview. As seen in the table 1, the interviews varied from roughly 22 to 48 minutes in length, without the time they took filling in the questionnaire. However, it should be noted that 2 out of 7 interviews were conducted over the phone and then the questionnaire was done orally rather

than having them to fill it out, therefore, the phone interviews took much less time than the face-to-face interviews. Additionally, the 4 latter interviews took less time than the 4 preceding ones, which indicates that the interview narrowed down or focused down in the process. In brief, if I could start again, I would shorten the questionnaire and narrow the interview down.

Therefore, at the data analysis phase I saw that the questionnaire could be narrowed down quite a lot. On the one hand, it proved to be a valuable tool to gather the more practical information, however, on the other hand, after the data collection I would now modify it a lot. It would be more helpful if they could merely have ticked their answers and only focus on numbers and years. I should have left out the questions of most important take-aways as well as close staff members, as it proved to be more helpful to ask those questions during the interview. Also, on average it took them about 20 minutes to fill in the questionnaire before the interview, and as the interview itself in longest took almost 50 minutes, they would stay in for more than an hour. This was much more of their time than what I wanted to take.

Questions were not always asked in the same way or in the same order; therefore, the approach was dynamic and adjustments were made depending on the length of answers and the willingness of the interviewee to share. Question 2 (Appendix 2) was changed or modified to help the interviewee relax in the beginning and the final wording was "Please describe. What's your life like right now or where are you in your life now?" This proved to be a good opening question that was easy to start with and in many interviews led to more, probing questions. Therefore, the interview mostly utilized open-ended questions such as the afore-mentioned. This "pursuing answers to questions" (Patton, 2015, p. 254) was important to allow the interviewees to freely narrate their stories and experiences.

It is important to develop rapport with the interviewees and thus attain meaningful information (Spradley, 1979). This means a "harmonious relationship" between the interviewer and the interviewee; a situation where trust allows "a free flow of information" (ibid, p. 44). Quite early on with the

interviews, I found that it was valuable to clearly bring out the fact that I was also working for UPW quite similarly as the interviewees had worked before, as my comments about the ASP's seemed to make them more comfortable during the interviews and gave us a common ground to work on. Therefore, I not only introduced myself and my research in the beginning of each interview, but also pointed out that I was currently working for one of the ASPs. During these dynamic interviews, I also paid close attention to genuinely appear interested in the answers and stories the interviewees were sharing as well as ask additional questions about what they were sharing about; this was to create an atmosphere where they had the role of a teacher and they knew more than me about something I wanted to find out about (Spradley, 1979). Additionally, as the qualities of rapport are culturally defined (ibid), faithfully to the culture in question I made sure to use friendly eye contact as well as words and sounds to tell my interviewees that I was listening.

Conducting the interviews was an interesting experience as each interviewee was unique. On the one hand, most of the interviewees were very open and talkative, and therefore with these ones the interviews were more like discussions where I mostly just acted as a listener. It was valuable to get to know the interviewees. Their life stories were very intriguing and many of their dreams and goals inspired me personally. On the other hand, a few of them answered most questions with one or two words and I really had to probe to get more out of them. I very much preferred the interviews done in person rather than the ones on phone, as the interviewees actually made their way to the UPW office and therefore gave more of their time to the process. In addition, the quality of the recordings of the interviews done in person proved to be much clearer than the quality of the recordings of the phone interviews.

4.4   Data analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the methods of qualitative research analysis and according to Braun & Clarke, ought to be seen as a "foundational method for

qualitative analysis" (2006, p. 78). Thematic analysis is used to identify recurring issues as well as themes that condense views that are collected (Brikci & Green 2007). This is a "fluid and dynamic" approach, with room left for making adjustments in the interview situation and afterwards (Guest et al., 2012). The words and phrases analyzed are those spoken only by the study participants, not the data collector (ibid). In the current research, the interview transcripts were read and annotated thoroughly before beginning to identify the recurring themes. While doing this, the research problem was kept closely in mind as to maintain the focus of the thesis. The interview responses were integrated and synthesized to create a "coherent story" with the theoretical background (Patton, 2015, p. 443). I personally preferred thematic analysis for its enormous flexibility (as in Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the researcher is eventually responsible for choosing what counts as a theme. In the current context and research, a theme was primarily chosen for its numerous emergence in all the data and all the different interviews. Because of their prevalence, these are identified as key themes in the current analysis. Mostly, the interviewees used the same phrases and/or described a theme in similar or consistent ways. Secondarily, some themes arose that either could be analyzed in dialogue with the theoretical framework or brought out something that the researcher identified as of importance to the youth program context and its development. Here, consistency was important as the choosing of the themes is the researcher's responsibility.

The practical purpose of the analysis was to evaluate the SLP through a former participant viewpoint, and the analytic purpose to identify the themes arising and compare and contrast them to each other as well as to form a dialogue between them and the theory. Therefore, the findings section was written as a dialogue between the theoretical background and the data. The current thematic analysis is the description of the participants' experience of the

youth program. The data was analyzed by themes that commonly recurred in the study participants' answers (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

It is important to explain how the qualitative analysis was made. The current study closely followed a 6-step guide to forming a thematic analysis introduced by Braun & Clarke (2006). After familiarizing myself with the data by listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts multiple times, I created color codes for sections where the participants' answers were in dialogue with the theoretical background. For example, red was used for underlining data excerpts of when the study participants discussed reasons for the local issues and problems such as violence and these excerpts were used in explaining what has contributed to the marginalization of the youth in Wilmington. Green was used for marking such excerpts indicating positive identity work through the program, and yellow for when they were asked to explain the term "transformation". Themes arose and they can be seen in table 2. The themes were reviewed and defined, and a report was written in dialogue with the theoretical background.

4.5   Reliability

The most critical issue in research is that it is valid and reliable (Bernard, 2006, as quoted by Guest et al. 2012). A research needs to be useful and for this reason it needs to also be reliable and trustworthy, since a phenomenon is studied for it to be understood and explained (Guest et al., 2012). In the current research, validity and reliability were added by using a questionnaire in addition to a dynamic interview. Close cooperation with UPW was done to identify possible participants who would be willing and open to give their time and take part in such a task. Obviously, one must address the potential biased position of the staff choosing the interviewees, however, they were willing to contact both people whose situation they knew well as well as people who they had lost contact with. In addition, both the questionnaire and the interview themes and questions were first given for the thesis supervisor at the University of

Jyväskylä and the development coordinator of UPW, for comments and improvements. In addition, the data collection was closely monitored and further adjustments were made during the process. Feedback for the questionnaire and the interview was asked immediately after the interview from the participants and it was used for improvements. Translation was not needed since the study and the interviews are in the same language.

Systematic fieldwork and analysis are primary in enhancing the credibility of a research (Patton, 2015). The fieldwork was focused on the interview situations and the discussions with the study participants to create an exemplar of the current phenomenon of a narrative of worth in marginalized youth through a critical youth program. Plenty of quotes, both short and long are utilized in the analysis to present their viewpoint as it was first said rather than merely presenting the researcher's own idea of data excerpts. Criticism of the SLP presented by the participants is not hidden by this research but both sides of its impact are shown. Rival explanations for the source and factors around the development of a narrative of worth are discussed.

It is important to point out that the researcher's own theoretical values and viewpoints are always a part of a qualitative analysis. Braun and Clarke point out (2006) that as it is the researcher who selects the data analyzed and edits the analysis, one always gives a part of their own voice in this process. In addition, Patton points out (2015) that with a qualitative research there may be a "suspicion that the analyst has shaped findings according to his or her predispositions" (p. 653). However, most importantly the theory and method needs to support and be in line with what the researcher wants to know, and the researcher needs to be aware of the significance of their acknowledgement and recognition of the decisions involved (ibid). Therefore, close attention was paid to these matters and decisions while analyzing and choosing the data represented. For example, as in many points various themes were discovered from the data, however, the ones in the last version of the analysis were chosen firstly for their multiple appearance or having emerged in multiple interviews, or secondly for their significance to the theoretical framework and specifically

the themes closely connected with the research problem or the context in question.

4.6   Ethical considerations

Before every interview, I communicated to the participant that their name was not going to be used in the final product or in any other phase of the project where it could have been exposed to someone other than the researcher. It was also made sure for them that no one else was to listen to the recording or use it anywhere. Each participant signed an informed consent form before the questionnaire and the interview (Appendix 4). This not only made the situation more formal but also let the participants know about their rights and options. It was especially important to let them know about their anonymity in the research process and I believe it enabled them to be more open and honest about their experience in the program.

As the face-to-face interviews took place at the head office of UPW, many people saw the interviewees arrive to and leave the interview situation. Therefore, and because some of the staff was familiar with some of the interviewees, it may be obvious for them from the final product and quotes which interviewee said what, but I did not discuss the content of the interviews with any of the UPW staff. However, as a researcher I have taken close care of protecting the identities of the study participants as well as possible, for example, they all had the possibility to choose an interview via telephone or alternatively to choose another venue for the interview. I do not mention details that reveal the study participants' identity in this research nor via other ways for UPW.

5 FINDINGS

The findings section is built in dialogue with the data and the theoretical background. The former participants' answers and the themes that arose from the data are discussed in a conversational manner with the ideas from the background literature. Plenty of quotes, both short and longer ones are shown to add transparency and trustworthiness to the study outcome. The section tackles the causes of marginalization of the youth in Wilmington, narrative of worth, presence of strategic others and transformation. A summary of the findings can be seen in the table 2.

TABLE 2. Summary of themes

Statement of the research problem	Themes
1. From the participants' viewpoint, what has caused the marginalization of the youth in Wilmington, Delaware, and how has the SLP helped them to identify and interrogate the oppression?	Lack of role models; broken home Lost community 'feel' 'Negativity'; violence; drug abuse Bad relationship with the police Racial issues
2. How has the SLP contributed to the former participants' narrative of worth? How has the program acted as a counterspace in the participants' lives?	Religion Leadership skills; being a role model Advice; teachings Encouragement for higher education Narrative of deficit not developed Inspiration for a future job
	Difficulty finding a place after the SLP UPW a family rather than a workplace 'lifechanging' experience having someone to support you; to talk to high expectations; challenges Adult figures
3. From the participants' viewpoint, what is the transformation that the SLP aims for?	Getting help & care from other people Realizing that I need to help & care for others Growth of character Putting ideas into action Being happy and doing what I want

5.1   What has marginalized the youth in Wilmington, DE?

The interviewees of the current research all commented on what is wrong in their society. Considering marginalization, one must ask what is wrong in the socio-economic or cultural structures or what sort of issues have driven these youth in a corner (Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013). It is important to identify the asymmetrical relations in the society as it currently is (McLaren, 2007). In the current research, the term "marginalization" or "marginalized youth" was not mentioned in the interview, however, aspects and opinions about it were clear in their answers to the other questions. The theoretical background showed the reasons to marginalization in this area shown by research, and here they are discussed together with the interviewee's ideas and comments. The reasoning is based on the above-mentioned questions about marginalization. The issues raised by the interviewees were drug abuse, violence, racial issues, lack of role models, people's deteriorated relationship with the police and lost sense of community.

Deteriorated relationship with the police and a lost sense of community have contributed to the marginalization of youth in Wilmington, Delaware. Firstly, I5 shared his desire to become a policeman by saying "I feel like I'd be a much better police officer 'cos I know how it is with police officers nowadays.. that relationship isn't.. what it should be" and therefore shared his desire to improve his city and the relationship between the police force and the people. Secondly, I2 talked about how the city has changed over time and how "old heads" say there used to be a stronger sense of community:

> you could leave your door unlocked and you didn't have to worry about people coming in and then the entire neighborhood was just your family.. like all the neighborhood had your back.. they be like oh yeah I saw your child doing this.. an oh thank you.. and you had your child right there.. yeah we just lost that community - - it seems like .. everybody has a problem.. a lot of people have a problem with like oh you should mind your own business - - people just get so defensive so quickly (I2)

One plausible reason to these worsened relationships in the community could be the lack of positive guidance in the young people's lives. I1 simply pointed out that there are "not many role models" around, whereas I2, I4 and I8

stated that there is clearly a lack of positive role models. I4 described how "a lot of these kids they don't even have.. a father in their life.. or even sometimes both of their parents", while I2 and I8 explained it in more detail:

> the struggles - - it just comes from.. you don't have that proper figure.. - - just having that same sex figure.. I probably could've benefited a lot from having my dad.. - - the kids just struggle when they don't have that.. when their role model sometimes isn't positive enough.. - - their parents aren't positive role models.. or that they're just gone.. like either dad locked up.. they can't see them (I2)

> I think it is the way it is because a lot of the time people come from broken homes.. when you come from a broken home you don't get love and like.. support you need .. and a lot of the times the dad isn't in their life so the mom like having to work and stuff. so your mom when she gets back from work she's tired to show love and support…- - go out and do different things and find love in gangs and you know.. - - so family broken homes is probably why this city is like this (I8)

Therefore, I2, I4 and I8 all state the importance of having the positive impact of an adult figure in one's life.

Crime and racial issues seem to be a part of the "negativity" the interviewees talk about. I3 and I4 both mention "negativity" in their answers: on the one hand, I3 states that children in Wilmington "are involved in the negativity - - they're not doing that they really could be doing" and how organizations like UPW are there to "take away the negativity". On the other hand, I4 describes how transformation happens when you come away "from a place of negativity";

> being a successful young black man in a community where people look down on you.. where they say oh he's never gonna make it .. he never gonna be nothing.. he's never gonna a full time job he's not gonna be a great dad.. and its just all these obstacles in front of you (I4)

and he is thankful to his brothers who "kept me out of so much negativity .. so many fights like whatever it was they were always there". He also describes his first high school by "like it was a lot of stuff going on like fights.. people doing drugs". Therefore, the negativity they describe involves at least violence, lack of encouragement – and probably racism as I4 describes what it is like to be a "young black man" in this society. Additionally, I8 aptly stated that because of this lack of caring, youth goes and finds "love in gangs". This may often result

in increased violence, crime and drug abuse, as shown earlier in the theoretical background.

5.2 Narrative of worth – individual psychosocial development through critical youth work

Positive identity work took place in the interviewees of the current study through participation in the SLP program and UPW. Special attention was given to how a narrative of deficit developed into a narrative of worth and good examples of this were found in the data. There were fewer examples of how a narrative remained in a deficient mode. Therefore, here, narrative of worth is seen through individual psychosocial development and how it is apparent in the data collected. All in all, more examples are seen from the interviews where the interviewees were more talkative and shared their life stories openly and in length. Some themes that rose from the analysis were religion and positive identity work, leadership skills and being a role model, education and relationships.

5.2.1 Positive identity work interrupted by difficulties

The data offered a couple of examples of how a narrative of deficit was not developed into a narrative of worth. Firstly, I8 shared her journey after graduation from the SLP and stated that she has a challenging time believing in her own capabilities:

> realistically I set my standards low.. cos I feel like I can't reach those goals.. so I probably wouldn't say that I have like high standards - - like I said I don't have.. I don't believe in myself - - I feel like if I was to change or transform myself I would be able to look through the eyes of seeking a full life (I8)

I8 was in a situation where she had had to drop out of college after the first semester for financial reasons. Now she was working for a fast-food restaurant and trying to make ends meet. She describes this in the following:

> right now my life.. is a mess - - I was in college and it ended up being too expensive so I couldn't afford to go back.. so now I have to – all this debt.. and so.. I thought that I

would still be in school and stuff like that.. - - just trying to figure out how to pay - - so I can go back.. so I'm at like a .. weird point of my life (I8)

Therefore, the deficit has come out of an inconvenient situation in her life, where she did not plan to be and she is in a crossroads earning money and paying off her debt. She does not have a clear plan of when to go back to school so she has been unable and a victim of her circumstances to develop a narrative of worth in this situation.

Secondly, I1 describes a comparable situation of a crossroads. When asked about whether the program taught I1 leadership skills, she commented that "like urban promise does like stretch you in leadership but I did not take that outside of urban promise". Clearly, she saw the benefit of participating in the SLP and learning leading, but she recognized that she had not used those skills outside work hours. However, here she is referring to the time when she was a teenager and does not comment on how she is using those skills in present. But all in all, she recognized her deficit that at the time remained a deficit. Similarly, I1 shared about the beginning of her college career and said:

> I was doing terrible at school.. I wasn't like going to class - - that put me back.. pretty much a year - - I changed my major three times- - I got my financial aid taken away from me from the government - - I think for me the biggest thing was just.. staying focused - - I lost focus (I1)

At the moment of the interview, I1 was able to analyze this time in her life and again, recognized the deficit but there was little sign of her having developed it:

> I plan to graduate in.. two more years hopefully.. but I'm also not taking as many classes as I was then.. because I work - - so but maybe I'd take.. if I could take summer courses then that'll speed up the process.. I plan to graduate in two years.. with umm.. with a.. a degree in behavioral science.. but I changed my major three times.. so I don't know how.. I don't really know.. (I1)

With repeating the words "I don't know", "maybe" and an increased flow of filler words or sounds such as "but" and "umm" as well as pauses, it can be interpreted that she still does not have a clear plan.

Interestingly, I1 shared about a dream or a goal that she had had as a child but that she had failed to achieve. Here, she described a strong narrative of

worth as she was growing up: "just like maybe since I was six years old.. I've had the same dream I wanted to be an obgyn..". Here, she described how she had had the same dream or goal for most of her life. However, the nature of the story quickly changed as she started telling more:

> I came to school and like I'm gonna be a doctor this is what I'm gonna do.. and then when I got there I'm like.. no… - - with the first day of class.. everyone like knew what was going on and I'm like.. what's going on.. like I didn't.. all the stuff that we'd supposed to have learnt in high school we never learnt none of it.. I started to feel like it was too far fetched.. and then that's why I changed my major the first time.. but then again like I wasn't even focused.. so.. then I start playing the what if game like what if I was focused would I still be in biology (I1)

Taking this and the previous paragraph into account, it seems that I1 is in a crossroads, where she is not sure what she wants next or where her life is going. She had a dream, a clear plan of what she wanted to do, but when the chance arrived to make it into reality, she felt deficient and was not able to find another goal as strong as the first one. Possibly, she could have used a stronger presence of a counterspace to push through this obstacle or in other words, someone to help her believe in herself. Instead, she chose to explain that "the stuff that we'd supposed to have learnt in high school we never learnt none of it" and suddenly, the goal she had had since she had been 6 years old, felt "far-fetched". With her present major and studies, her only comment is "I don't really know".

5.2.2 Successful positive identity work

An advice or a lesson given can work as a shift in the development of a deficit into a narrative of worth. 3 examples of this can be taken from the data. Firstly, I2 openly shares about what his personal problem has been:

> for me the biggest thing he taught me was you can't keep running away.. for me I was a blameshifter.. I would say this is the reason why and you're doing this to me and there's parts of me still today that I'm still a blameshifter (I2)

And he shares what a staff member at the SLP taught him:

> he was the one who'd say like that's not gonna fly with me.. you're not gonna shift blame at no one else.. you're gonna stand up and own up to responsibility.. take responsibility for what you did.. he wouldn't let me get away with anything (I2)

I2 then goes on to share a story where he did own up to what he did; where he had a chance to become an assistant team leader or ATL in the SLP and at the ASP he was working for, but he got into trouble for using his cell phone during working hours. I2 describes the situation as follows:

> He *(a staff member)* said you were almost there.. - - you had a good opportunity but you messed it up because you were on your cell phone.. and there I was upset.. I wanted to blame like uh I wanted to sit there and say like well everyone else was on their phones.. you just didn't see them.. I saw them.. and in that moment I just took responsibility.. I owned up to the lies that I did and the entire school year I worked hard.. I showed enough growth and responsibility to where I could become the assistant team leader (I2)

Here, one can see that I2 recognized his deficit through what someone told him – that he is indeed shifting blame inappropriately – and he describes how he took that lesson and made a change in his attitude. He recognizes it as a moment of "growth and responsibility", which indicates that positive identity work has taken place in that situation and from that situation on.

Secondly, and similarly to I2's story, I4 learnt a lesson from something that he was told. He narrates how he was working in the SLP but was not doing well at school: "I just didn't wanna do homework.. I wouldn't do nothing unless it was something I wanted to do.. It was not that I couldn't do it it was just that I didn't put my mindset to it". I4 describes his unwillingness to do homework or work towards improving his grades, which was a requirement by the SLP program. He had struggled with the same thing even before becoming involved with UPW, as he shares what his former youth worker had said:

> like that's one thing he always said about me like.. you know you're doing wrong.. and the crazy part is you won up to it you won't even lie to him.. you just be like.. alright yeah I did it - - I never really understood what he was talking about until.. like I end up like goin' to parties and stuff like that - - is what got me into these dangerous situations (I4)

Therefore, up to the time of the interview he clearly recognized his deficit. I4 said that it was not that he could not do his homework or other schoolwork, but

merely that he did not want to or that he was lazy to do it. He goes on to describe what "flipped the switch":

> I think that's what like really like.. like flipped the switch for me when james and mister jeff and .. miss Kristen like when they got onto me about stuff like I knew like alright these are the people I have to listen to.. like if I don't ima get fired.. and eventually I did get fired.. cos I wouldn't stop.. I wouldn't go to tutoring (I4)

I4 recognizes his deficit here and goes on to share how after this he became a teenage dad and started the UPA after failing at a public high school. He describes how the public high school was "a rude awakening for me cos.. like it was a lot of stuff going on like fights.. people doing drugs" and how transferring to the UPA ended up being "like another part of urban that changed my life or like helped me get to where I am today". Therefore, even though he did not completely change his way of behavior before he ended up being fired, he did earn his way back to the SLP and became a Team Leader (TL) in the ASP he worked for.

Thirdly, when asked about how she was influenced by her relationships with the SLP and UPW staff, I6 states that she received help with her anger problem:

> like when I was going to the academy there was a lot of things.. that made me frustrated.. and my anger was a big problem because I would get upset.. and wanted to just always lash out.. and .. like uh.. Deborah would help me.. control that.. and be like.. I shouldn't .. lash out I should.. like breath and let them go.. just communicate.. so they - - helped me talk it out (I6)

She states specific ways of how she got advice and help with her problem; she needed to "breath", "let them go", "communicate" and "talk it out". Therefore, she not only recognized that her way to deal with her anger was not beneficial for anyone but also received tools on how to better behave when she felt it. She had learnt that talking was a better way of handling issues than "lashing out".

I4 shared another deficit turned into worth that deserves its own paragraph. He described his fascination in guns, in his own words "I was so like I don't know why but I was into guns", and goes on to share a memory of a basketball game with friends that escalated into a gun violence scene.

one of the guys from the other team ended up pulling out a gun.. and like actually really 'bout to shoot one of my friends.. and I end up having I don't know why but I stepped in between it was like.. like you're not like you're not gonna do this.. like this a basketball game you about to take somebody's life over a game↑ (I4)

In addition, he shared that he knew the person holding the gun. I4 explained how "that's the crazy part about living around here.. all these deaths all these murders are from people you grew up with.. like ya'll killin' each other and ya'll mom and dad know each other.. and its just sad". Therefore, this experience made him feel like he needed a gun to survive in his neighborhood. He noted that "seein' him with that gun.. it kinda made me look like alright.. if I have a gun then people will fear me". However, and more importantly, at the interview time he shared how he now recognized how this fascination was a deficit in his life: "that mindset was so dangerous to me like I didn't.. at the time even understand.. because now when I look back on it.. I could've been killed".

Moreover, I4 and I6 state that they received leadership skills from participation in the SLP. While I6 merely points out that the SLP "gave me leader skills", I4 describes this experience in detail:

> If I'm still doing what I'm doing how dare me come to work telling anybody what to do.. If I'm still in the streets running around fighting.. going doing this.. how dare I come to work thinking anybody's gonna listen to me.. - - cos these kids see you (I4)

> its crazy how you form a bond with some of these kids - - because those are just the kind of kids that hit your heart.. their story really hits you - - it just hits you so hard you just wonder like man.. what can I do to help this kid.. along this process to make it better (I4)

While I1 did not take the leadership skills outside of the work environment, as described earlier, I4 illustrates this by saying how he needs to be an example for the children he works with. From this quote, one can read that he understood how he needed to practice what he preached, as he eventually did as we can read from his story. He also says how "the more I worked with the kids the more it changed me as a person - - the more I developed into a leader". Additionally, I4 at the time of the interview was still volunteering in UPW events e.g. as a basketball coach, even 3 years after his graduation from the SLP program.

Additionally, I4 shared openly that the "main way" that the SLP and UPW helped him was "to put god first before anything".

> the more I put god first .. and listened to that model the more god just blessed me - - a new car a new job.. like it was just like god was providing for me in different ways.. just because of the things that urban had already instilled in us (I4)

> they always reminded me like.. you know if you're out doing this like your dad and your brother they ↑ see what you're doing.. and more importantly god sees what you're doing.. so just kept me in a mindset that like alright everything I do I know.. somebody's looking at me - - and see the more I kept that mindset the more I just.. stayed out of trouble.. the more I could pour into these kids the more I could even pour into my coworkers (I4)

As described in section 3.3.3, religion has been found a protective factor against criminal or risk-taking behavior and it can promote positive identity work (see 3.3.3; Lerner & Galambos, 1998, as quoted by King & Furrow, 2004; Furrow et. al, 2004). I4 points out in his story how keeping this "mindset" about a godly influence kept him "out of trouble", which indicates that religion has worked as an influential resource for him. In addition, I7 depicted how the bible lessons in the SLP and ASP's influenced her:

> with them doing bible.. inside of here influenced me more to go to church myself and.. just look at it look at the bible myself and learn on it.. instead of going on what people say or what I'm hearing (I7)

I8 related to UPW and the SLP easier because she "grew up in church so this is definitely like my second family - - so I definitely enjoyed that community in Christ" and said that she strives towards "keeping god involved in my every decision".

For I3 and I6, the SLP helped realize that they want to pursue higher education. Now, the SLP takes its participants to college tours where they even have a chance to sleep in a college dormitory for a night, eat at the cafeteria and take part in lectures. The purpose of such trips is to create a vision of a different life especially for the youth who do not have a plan for what they want to achieve, or even dreams or goals for their lives. So first, I6 shared in the interview how she caught that vision: "it [SLP] definitely had an impact I mean it like.. made me realize that education is something important and .. - - career..

also.. it made me realize that I do wanna go to college". At the time of the interview, I6 had just recently had her second child, and had not yet graduated from high school. However, she was working towards it and had a clear plan of graduating in a few months of time and afterwards starting college studies.

Second, I3 instead shared that he always knew he wanted to go to college, but that the SLP merely enforced the idea. He said that "the streetleader program it gave me a good practice.. great practice actually.. for becoming an educator.. learning at a young age when I had to be patient.. when I had to be caring and loving" and "I already knew I was going to college.. but I would say that it refined me and made me a better person to do this". At the interview moment, I3 was working hard in a college towards becoming a teacher and eventually a principal. In addition, he describes how the SLP program has helped him later in college as well:

> honestly I can say I learnt a lot.. I was able to add and review a lot of the things I learnt in urban promise.. in my college career.. and ive been able to use in my life as well (I3)

I1 shared how she had bad experiences about romantic relationships as a teenager and young adult:

> Growing up it was just like.. it felt like oh I'm gonna get married and have kids and its gonna be perfect.. I lost sight of that like.. having boyfriends and heartaches.. I lost sight of that a lot.. and which is one of the reasons why I'm thankful for urban promise cos its given me that hope back.. Bethany and josh.. very happy married couple.. aaron and Mariah.. and luke's getting married.. its definitely inspired me and james and vanessa.. like.. its given me that hope (I1)

After the "heartaches", this dream and ideal had turned into a deficit in her life; she "lost sight" with it. However, through being a part of SLP and UPW in general, she described how she started hoping for a good relationship with someone again after seeing stable, working marriages in the UPW staff. Therefore, seeing working examples of what she wanted to achieve in her life helped her develop a hopeful attitude about it in her own life.

To finalize this section with a couple of additional points, I6 and I7 described what else they learnt from the program:

gave me.. foundation to finish what I start.. helped me like realize that punctuality and honesty are something really important.. in a working environment (I6)

I would hate it (tutoring).. I would hate coming but .. in the long run.. - - sometimes I wouldn't have work to do so they would give me work to do .. and I'd be just like oh my gosh why did I come.. (laughter).. - - but in the long run they helped out - - with doing tutoring in the long run it helped me bring up my grades (I7)

I6 stated that she learnt the importance of finishing what you start, coming to work on time and being honest. Clearly, these had been problematic or unknown to her before, and enforced by the staff during the program, since they came to her mind when she was thinking of her experience. I7 pointed out that she used to dislike going to the tutoring classes required by the program, but could later see the value in it as her grades improved. These were lessons that they remembered even long after finishing the program, and maybe these memories had even been re-enforced as I6 and I7 had both become mothers at the time of the interview.

5.3 Narrative of worth – promoting social justice through critical youth work

The development of a narrative of worth can also be seen in how the participants of the current thesis developed a desire to promote social justice. Signs of this sort of critical consciousness can be observed in the data; how the interviewees identify and are willing to interrogate oppression through their own abilities and lives. The participants showed willingness to act against oppression, encourage others and promote social justice especially through their statements of what their future plans are. What especially came out from the answers was how the program was what they wanted to use their lives for or how the program had inspired them to acquire a particular profession or lifestyle.

I1, I2, I4 and I5 talked about especially influencing the youth in their own neighborhood when expressing their hopes for the future and what they want to be like or do with their lives. While I5 wanted to be influential through the police force or "something like this program", I1, I2 and I4 talk more about their

personal responsibility and desire to be a role model and an example for those younger:

> I wanna be .. like a person in the neighborhood that the kids can look up to.. it's not impossible for me to go to college.. because (I1) went to college and like.. she's from this neighborhood and she grew up just the same way that I grew up - - just having that..the fact that I can be a role model.. the fact that I can encourage and inspire someone else (I1)

> my dream is to be a counselor to children.. I just wanna be a guidance counselor I wanna start my own counseling business - - the reason why I wanted to do this was.. a lot of kids struggle - - a lot of kids just need that special one on one time - - they may have a lot of siblings and it's hard for them to get that one on one attention.. or they just don't have that proper figure in their lives - - I just wanna be an outlet for kids (I2)

> the more I worked with kids the more it changed me as a person.. and more so as a man of my community - - if I'm still doing what I'm doing how dare me come to work telling anybody what to do.. if I'm still in the streets running around fighting - - cos these kids they see you - - their story really hits you - - it just hits you so hard you just wonder like man.. what can I do now to kinda help this kid.. along this process to make it better (I4)

Here we can see Maslow's ideas of self-actualization and transcendence come to life. As I1, I2 and I4 realize their own potential of being someone "the kids can look up to", being "an outlet" for them or "a man of my community", they also realize they want to help them and work towards their benefit rather than their own. Huitt (2007) describes this as going "beyond the ego" or "self-transcendence"; when you are self-actualized and you in addition identify the opportunity to transcend or to help others achieve it as well (ibid). Norwood describes this as seeking various levels of information; to enlighten or to have one's belonging needs met; to empower or to seek ego development; or to edify in oneself (as quoted by Huitt, 2007). According to Huitt (ibid), at this level a person is also seeking how to "connect to something beyond themselves or to how others could be edified" (ibid).

While I6 had a plan of studying to become a registered nurse, I3 was in college working towards becoming a teacher and eventually a principal. He talked about how he wanted to "move up" and even

> going to educational law and fixing some of the laws that we have against students that are not for them or not in the benefit of them but.. the benefit of test makers and uh.. they just don't have the students interest at heart (I3)

Therefore, and apart from the other participants of the current study, I3 reached his desire to promote social justice up to the legislative level. He did not want to settle for becoming an educator but he wanted to move up to be a leader of a school and even affect the national educational laws that he saw inadequate or unjust and not benefiting the students. All in all, I3 had clear plans of how to accomplish his goal to promote justice. The other interviewees had desires and ideas but had not taken clear steps of how to achieve them.

5.4   Presence of strategic others

The idea of a counterspace involves the idea of caring and the presence of strategic others. Therefore, in the current section these concepts will be discussed in a dialogue between the findings and the theory. The participants of the current study communicated in different words and ways how they have experienced UPW as a counterspace. They pointed out how the presence of strategic others, most importantly the UPW staff, has been significant in their development of a narrative of worth, as well as how their participation in the SLP and the community of others has promoted their self-worth and self-enhancement. It can be interpreted from the data that UPW has clearly been a community of resistance to the interviewees and as a group where its members share a narrative and promote each other's sense of worth. The interviewees' difficulty finding a place after graduation from the SLP, their description of UPW as a family rather than workplace and how the SLP was a life-changing experience refer to how strongly UPW worked as a counterspace for them. The interviewees' descriptions of having the presence of a strategic other and sometimes especially a same-sex adult figure as well as being challenged and given expectations are analyzed through the idea of the power of caring (see 3.3.2).

5.4.1 Counterspace

I4, I5 and I7 expressed their difficulty in finding a place in life after the SLP. This speaks of how important UPW was for them and how strong its influence was in their lives.

> it was just so hard to just.. cos I'm so used to like I get up go to school.. I go straight to work .. and not having that mindset like when you know like alright you don't gotta get to work no more like.. its time for you to look for a new job.. its just like.. here we go .. and it's just like you.. you begin to get all these extra responsibilities that you didn't have before (I4)

> after I left.. it was different.. a whole different uh .. I guess ballgame.. cos you're not surrounded by that environment - - in a different environment it's not that religious background it's not uh.. care about what you think - - a whole different mindset (I5)

Therefore, starting adulthood, going to college or looking for a job are substantial changes for young people, and having had a strong, influential counterspace that is not present in one's life anymore can make the change even bigger. It may take time to get accustomed to the new situation.

Change of staff or change of youth workers can have a massive impact on the success of critical youth work. I4 talked about another youth program in the area that had existed before UPW and he said that "with the boys and girls club just .. it came just like.. a ghost town.. like there was nobody wanted to go there no more.. all the people that made it fun like they left or retired from there". In addition, something that used to work as a counterspace can also change drastically, as I7 commented that "we still keep in touch - - but I don't come here as much as I used to.. it's just like kinda awkward". The work of organizations may end, jobs may end, and for someone who recognizes these environments and people groups as a counterspace, those endings can make a change to the worse in the development of their narrative of worth.

A counterspace "allows for an idealized-world-setting" which can feel like a family or even a life-changing environment for the marginalized youth (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 265). I1, I2, I4, I5, I7 and I8 or six out of eight interviewees used the term 'family' or terms such referring to a family while describing UPW and what the organization means to them. I2 talked about UPW having a

"family atmosphere", I7 and I5 both described it "like one big family" and I8 stated that UPW is "definitely like my second family". I1 described a female youth worker "like my mom" and a male youth worker "like my dad".

> it was more than a job like.. it was like family.. like we go out even afterwards like some of us would go out and go out and eat - - just because of the respect and love we have for each other from here (I4)

I7 also said that the staff encouraged her even though it was "not even a part of their job description". The level of the commitment of the youth workers obviously contributed to the family atmosphere of the SLP. Finally, I1 and I4 went on to state that UPW or SLP changed their lives. I1 described "I definitely say that urban promise saved me - - I don't know where I would be without urban promise", while I4 said that UPA was "like another part of urban that really changed my life or like helped me get to where I am today". Not only was UPW like a family to them, but a supportive family encouraging them to achieve what they wanted to achieve or be more or different from what they thought they could be.

5.4.2 Power of caring

I1, I3, I6 and I7 pointed out that it was important to have someone who they felt like they could talk to and who wanted the best for them in life. I1 and I3 described some youth workers as follows:

> she was always there.. she like called me - - we'd always stay in touch and always meet for breakfast and she'd check on me - - she's always been my connection to urban promise like even.. after I left (I1)

> always have my best interest at heart - - welcomed me to different things - - she knew was out of my comfort zone - - and she always said go ahead you're ready - - I knew I could always call her (I3)

I7 stated that a male youth worker was her "main person I would go to" and she said that "I could talk to him – and he'll always try to get me the uh go to these little groups outside of urban promise where you go fishing and horseback riding". Lastly, I6 described how one of the youth workers was still a part of her life, even after the program: "she's my mentor she helps me out like..

I know I can talk to her.. call her about anything even though I'm not like streetleader anymore.. and she's just a good person like.. to talk to". She also appreciated the mentor's "honest advice" even though it was not always what she primarily wanted to hear, which shows growth.

I2, I3, I5, I6 and I8 described how the SLP set expectations for them that helped them grow. I5 said that "I'd got to do stuff that.. I wouldn't have done.. anywhere else.. so I mean I definitely had some challenges". I3 described how "they did set very high expectations for me.. which I liked because it pushed me into being better than what I was" and even remembered a lesson about expectations taught to him by his youth worker back then: "uh joel always had a saying when he was my director.. unclear expectations always go unmet.. and uh.. the effect of that you know be as clear as you can possibly be". Similarly, I2 and I8 explained how

> the people itself were the ones who really challenged me - - he was the one who'd say that's not gonna fly with me - - he wouldn't let me get away with anything - - he just set a lot of expectations on me like I know you can do this.. he pushed me to actually own up to many things (I2)

> sometimes where I just wanna – like go off path.. there was always somebody like.. – what are you doing - - like just having somebody to have high expectations for you and push you.. going 'bove and beyond so that was probably a big challenge for me (I8)

Gay states (2000) how empowerment is one of the characteristics for caring relationships. Here we can see examples of how caring has happened in the form of helping one step over a fear or do something that they did not necessarily want to or were not ready to do.

I2, I4 and I5 talked about how they valued having a same-sex adult figure for them in UPW. While talking about the same youth worker as quoted in the previous paragraph, I2 said that "I've had a couple of father figures but jeff – and my stepdad were the most prominent and consistent in my life". Moreover, I5 described some youth workers as "two of them like someone like older brother - - sometimes I miss the environment - - the staff cos we always hung out.. it's like one big family". I4 went on to explain how after his father, brother

and some other relatives' deaths that happened close to each other the "male guidance" in UPW became more important:

> they all passed away.. so I was like at the time I didn't really have that.. that male guidance.. and I wanna say that's where mister james and mister jeff and james – like played a big part in my life.. because they always reminded me like.. you know you're out doing this like your dad and your brother they ↑see what you're doing (I4)

All in all, the positive influence of others was a significant factor in all the interviewees' lives. In addition to all above-mentioned, I2 described in length how he admired his youth worker and even after 5 years from graduation from the SLP, was still following his example in life. I6 portrayed her mentor, who is a staff member in UPW, as someone who gives "honest advice", helped her "second think a lot of things" and with whom she still met weekly even after the SLP. Also, I5 met I4 after a long time right before our interview, and he described I4 as follows:

> When I saw (I4) you know he was my team leader my first year - - seeing him now.. he got a car he got a kid now.. I mean.. I want that stuff but you know you just gotta work for it.. and I know when he would share - - his life story.. to see where he's come from I mean that's advice right there.. you see the stuff that he want now he's out there to get it.. what more advice could you have from someone who helped train you (I5)

Indeed, what more advice could you have from someone except their life?

5.5   What is transformation?

All the interviews ended in a final question of what the interviewee's idea of transformation or full life is. The idea of transformation is very present in the Urban Promise working environment; it is the main part of the organizational vision and goal and constantly talked about by the staff. Before answering the question, I6 commented that "I mean they do say that a lot and and I know Rob (executive director) he.. talks about that a lot and .. they all try to touch on it". The question was recorded in the interview in the form of the following words:

> The Urban Promise vision states that we want to see the youth transformed and seeking a full life. What is your idea of a "full life"? In what way the program reached the vision in your life or did it? (Appendix 2)

Even though in the dynamic style of the interview the form of the question was often modified, the idea was kept the same as in while the vision statement is this, what your idea or view of transformation and full life is. The interviewees all gave thought to the question and delivered various answers and ideas for the current concept. Table 3 shows the division of answers.

TABLE 3. Transformation

Transformation =	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8
Getting help and care from other people	x	x	x	x	x			
Realizing that I need to help and care for others	x	x	x	x	x			
Growth of character		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Putting ideas into action			x	x			x	x
Being happy and doing what I want						x	x	

Five out of eight interviewees or I1, I2, I3, I4 and I5 stated that transformation is a process facilitated by the help and care of another person. Firstly, I1 and I2 specifically mentioned the power of caring and nurturing others in their answers: I1 stated that "actually caring what their answer is.. – not just doing something to benefit yourself but … doing it because you care" whereas I2 talked about his experience of the Urban Promise staff in "looks like.. hey we're gonna nurture you we're gonna help you grow we're gonna make you strong". Therefore, they have understood the power of caring in influencing someone else's life. Secondly, the five interviewees specifically mentioned their own responsibility to help others as well. I1 stated that transformation means "being involved in someone's life .. and making .. like a difference".

I3, I4 and I5 talked about transformation involving investing in other people's lives; that is means "pursuing it (dream) and bringing others and encouraging others" (I3), that it is "a process of bringing people along with you" (I4) and how "your whole life is just.. - - how you're gonna invest in someone's life you know .. and change their heart" (I5). Additionally, I4 asked "why not help the next person get over those hurdles especially when you've been through them", therefore; there was a realization that I am able to use what I learnt in someone else's life. However, I6 and I7 narrowed the idea of

transformation and living a full life to how they themselves are feeling; I6 said transforming is doing and understanding "what's best for you" and how to "succeed in your own way", and I7 stated that "as long as you're happy I think that's full life".

In one way or the other, all excluding I1 pointed out the importance of individual psychosocial growth and development as well as putting ideas into action in their answers. I2 stated that transformation involves "having the person live out to the best in their life - - live up to their full potential", indicating that transformation is doing more than what one is doing at the moment. Additionally, I8 talked about transformation being "having a different mindset like.. you can do this and you can do that.. - - going 'bove and beyond". I6 simply said that transformation means "becoming more than just statistics" whereas I7 understood that growth is constant: "I'm not saying that I'm there completely yet.. but I think it (SLP) has impacted and helped mold it to the person I'm looking for into being". I3 and I4 pointed out that transformation means not letting one's circumstances be a source of discouragement and developing a narrative of worth out of something that has perhaps been a deficit. I3 said that "I wanna be better than my mother I wanna be better than my father.. so that's the transformation part.. breaking those generation of curses" whereas I4 defined transformation in his own life as

> Transformation.. to me it means like..- - being a successful black man in a community where people look down on you.. where they say oh he's never gonna make it.. he never gonna be nothing.. he's never gonna have a full time job he's not gonna be a great dad.. - - are you gonna jump over those hurdles.. or are you just gonna run - - transformation means to me like coming from a place of negativity - - going to a place where you could be (I4)

Therefore, whereas I3 talks about "being better" and I2 about "full potential", I4 actually mentions more specific things, such as having a full time job or improving one's parenting skills. Additionally, I6 shares a story of "when I started (SLP) I used to not like speaking in front of people.. but when I got here it changed", therefore; I6 mentions another specific aspect of transformation. All in all, seven out of eight interviewees answered the question by talking about

various aspects of positive personal development as a definition of what transformation is.

5.6 Feedback and suggestions for UPW from the participants of the study

Feedback and suggestions specifically for the organization and program in question were given by six out of eight interviewees in the current study. As seen, the SLP program contributed to the interviewees narrative of worth, helped them through the power of caring and strategic presence of others and made them seek ways to promote social justice. Therefore, undoubtedly the SLP program was a critical and valuable time for each of the interviewees' lives. However, as said, although not specifically asked in the questionnaire or the interview, 6/8 participants in the study wanted to give feedback and suggestions for the future of the program and I believe that they are important to be brought to light as a part of the findings. The criticism derived from either the interview questions or occasionally came out while the participants answered the questions. Additionally, table 4 shows the participants' answers and comments to the question of how needed UPW is in Wilmington, DE. They could answer with a number from one to ten, so that number one represented 'not needed at all', while number ten translated as very needed.

TABLE 4. Participants' answers – how needed UPW is in Wilmington

Interviewee	1-10	Comment
8	10	gives people a second family, surrounds you around God, gives lots of cool opportunities one normally wouldn't be given
3	10	needed all over the us; to get a second chance; to take away the negativity
2	10	in a time where the city is in a terrible state it truly needs many positive places
4	10	kids need somewhere safe to be and at the same time hear about God
5	no answer	I don't know how to answer this question cos they're not… out there.. in the community - - they got different camps all over.. I mean you need bigger you need a lot more equipment and more staff members
7	10	urban promise really sticks out cos.. not only are you watching them during the summer but during the school time.. youre helping

		them with their work
6	9	less violence
1	10	

Six out of eight participants gave UPW a ten, one out of eight gave a nine and one participant did not want to answer the question. Three out of eight participants felt that UPW either is a safe or a positive environment for children to spend time in after school and I6 said that it means less violence for the whole city. I8 commented that it is a "second family" for children and provides "cool opportunities". I7 explained that it differs from other camp programs because it provides activities throughout the year and I3 pointed out that programs that UP offers are needed all over the USA. Only I5 left the space blank, and explained in the interview that UPW needs more advertisement around the city to be a helpful and a visible organization. However, mostly the interviewees felt that it is a very necessary organization in Wilmington.

I2, I4 and I8 felt like they would have needed more help with the transition to college and/or working life after the SLP and high school. I4 does not explicitly say he needed help, but describes the situation as follows:

> like once you graduate the program it's kinda hard to just be like alright.. bye see you later.. and not gonna come back so.. I think that's the hardest for me - - not having a mindset like when you know like alright you don't gotta get to work no more like.. its time for you to look for a new job.. it's just like.. here we go.. and it's just like you.. you begin to get all these extra responsibilities that you didn't have before (I4)

I8 elaborated her need of assistance more directly:

> I think maybe if we had like cos we did have things like talk about schools and which school you wanna go to and stuff.. but just being down and the realistic part of it like ok your school cost this much.. your family makes this much you're not gonna be able to afford to go there.. and it would've been crushing but like the reality (I8)

Leaving a counterspace, the community of resistance, the empowering setting where the strategic presence of others is constantly around you is obviously not easy. Change is seldom easy. Therefore, the above-described feelings seem normal. However, I8 gives specific advice of what else could be done to facilitate the graduated Streetleaders' journey to adulthood and it could be

easily implemented; planning is needed for how to facilitate the transition, obviously within the limits of number of staff and resources.

I2's criticism was specifically directed to how he had experienced the program as well as how he felt he was cared for and loved by the UPW staff. I asked him if UPW could have done something more to help him with the transition from the program and high school to college and working life. He answered:

> I definitely messed up big time.. when I definitely didn't reach out to urban promise.. I swear I could've had some help - - I wanna say that a good part of why I struggled so much after urban promise was because of me.. (I2)

All in all, he had been very positively influenced by the program, as seen from the findings sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4. Also, as seen from the previous comment, even though he had had difficult time after graduation, he is able to see that UPW would have helped him if he had reached out to them and blames himself more than the organization. However, even though throughout the interview it was explicit how much he adores the organization and his time as a Streetleader, in the end of the interview he explains how he feels now:

> like having a person raise them through your program and send them off to college.. and have them come back and use the gifts that they've nurtured in college for your own uh things - - because from really honestly looks like.. hey we're gonna nurture you we're gonna help you grow we're gonna make you strong.. we're gonna make you this person to live up to their full potential.. and we're gonna use you until.. we can't use you anymore.. that's what it seems like.. - - there's gonna be someone who can come along who can fill the void.. who can do things a lot faster and better than you can (I2)

There is some contradiction in the two answers. On the one hand, he does not blame UPW, but it is quite clear from the second comment that he feels left out and used. However, being a part of a counterspace such as the SLP for five years as I2 had been, and UPW even longer, transition to a completely different life obviously has difficulties. Then again, he had graduated from SLP five years before the moment of the interview, therefore, he had had plenty of time to think about his experience. Therefore, it is important to take such feelings and issues into account while planning the future of the program.

I3 pointed out his concern for the UPW staff's lack of reaction to or willingness to discuss racial matters and issues. He describes his experience in the following way:

> by the time I was in urban promise.. events started happening.. and the black and white - - started unraveling.. we really didn't talk that much about it.. you hear me I would say in the current events that are happening in the African American society.. most people that they (UPW) work with are African American.. it actually does matter to us.. so.. just not talking about it in the place of work you know what I mean.. - - you know.. how can we encourage you to be better than that or how can we show you that we care about you you know what I mean.. or how can we be the voice for you.. you know so uh just speaking more about that (I3)

I3 understands that a majority of the Streetleaders are racially in a marginal or marginalized in many ways. He also sees that as most of the teenagers are African American, most of the staff is not. He calls for an open discussion in UPW about racial matters and problems that are going on in the American society.

I1 and I5 feel that there is some small-mindedness in the organization regarding the religious aspect, the SLP as a youth employment program and advertisement. I1 talked about how she hopes that people who are not religious could work at UPW or SLP "without feeling like an outsider":

> I wish there was a way to include people who are not religious.. - - I know that like urban promise wouldn't be urban promise if it wasn't based around god but I definitely wish that kids without the same religious background had the same opportunity as well.. (I1)

I1 agreed that UPW does not require the Streetleaders to be Christian, therefore all teenagers do have the same opportunity. However, she stated that

> I think there's no way to escape it.. – regardless if you believe or not.. you pray at camp everyday.. - - it is pushed or you are heavily influenced.. but you know what you're signing yourself into.. because they don't hide it.. - - I just wish there was a way to maneuver around that (I1)

I5 states that "they say it's a job training program.. and they wanna train you you know for future jobs" but is of the opinion that "you just really.. you just watching kids". Additionally, I1 suggests that in addition to working at the after-school programs the SLP could come up "with some sort of program to

like shadow.. shadow somebody.. for instance like I wanted to be a doctor.. maybe urban promise has some connections where I liked I could've shadowed a doctor for a day or something like that". He feels that the program has not helped him to get a job, also because he states that people "don't even know what urban promise is and it's hard to explain". He feels that UPW needs "a lot more equipment and more staff members - - there's no billboards or signs".

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to find out how the SLP as a critical youth program has influenced its participants' lives from their viewpoint. The themes researched were the causes of marginalization of the youth in Wilmington, DE and how the SLP has helped them to interrogate the oppression; how the SLP has helped them to develop a narrative of worth and how it has acted as a counterspace in their lives; and what transformation translates as according to the former participants of the program. The data was collected from interviews with 8 former participants of the SLP that had finished the program within the last five years in UPW in Wilmington, DE during the spring of 2017. The data was thematically analyzed and the themes were examined in dialogue with the theoretical background. The findings are discussed in relation to the context and theory in detail here. Lastly, I will point out the limitations of the study and provide suggestions for further research which are several in the current topic.

6.1 Examination of the findings

The findings of the present study show how marginalized youth can develop a narrative of worth through critical youth work. In this examination, the findings are mirrored with the earlier research results and theory presented in the literature review. The significance of the outcome of this study is examined; how the findings correlate with those of earlier research as well as what kind of additional information this study provides. It is important to note that the

research questions are connected: developing a narrative of worth has helped them identify the oppression and a counterspace has helped the youth develop a narrative of worth. Therefore, the discussion here involves all the questions in a mixture. Moreover, the fulfillment of the objectives and their suitability to practice are critically examined. While the results highly correlate with earlier studies and existing information, the current phenomena remain under-researched and calls for further study to examine the impact of critical youth work (CYW) in a larger extent.

Wilmington, DE, is a challenging context where multiple factors have contributed to the marginalization of its youth. Because of "asymmetric relations" (McLaren, 2007, p. 189) and unequal education and teachers that perceive African American students less cooperative than white students (Gay, 2000), and because of high rates of poverty, violence and drug abuse, drop-out rates and unemployment are high. The racial issues are often underlying relations in the community and only brought out by one study participant (I4). Similarly to Harris' idea (Jones, 2014), half of the interviewees' of this research brought out the lack of proper role models in the community and problems in the home, such as divorce or even death. This study found that there is a "negativity" deriving from the problems with violence and drugs that contributes to a lost sense of community. One study participant mentioned that the police force is not respected or trusted. However, any the participants did not mention poverty or unemployment while talking about the problems in their city. All in all, the interviewees give important examples of how CYW and education in the area can work against the marginalization of the youth; investing in relationships and supporting with care, giving a safe place to stay instead of being constantly exposed to drug abuse or violence, fighting against racial oppression by showing a better example and trusting the police and therefore improving the relationship between the civils and the local authorities. In this way, the marginalized youth finds a different margin where they can build "alternative 'counter-hegemonic' cultural practices" (Smyth, 2011, p. 107).

This study shows how critical youth work can help marginalized youth fight against the oppression around them. The development of a narrative of worth through CYW has helped the youth fight against the oppression to some extent. As described (see 2.2, 3.3.1), the SLP as CYW aims for a narrative of worth in young people, both individually and collectively (Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013). The youth in Wilmington, DE, are provided with tools and ways to not only to identify oppression but to work over it in their own lives through the SLP. The ways in which the narrative of worth was developed were religion (3/8), learning leadership skills and therefore being challenged (2/8), given advice or a lesson (3/8), encouragement for education (3/8) and otherwise inspiration for future plans and goals (5/8). According to Smyth (2011, p. 56), working towards a change in attitude and thinking of the youth, one must "make it visible for them", so that they can start considering it. In the SLP, the youth learns through example and dialogue, has been inspired by it and has been able to create new scenarios for their lives. For oppressed people and marginalized youth, to be able to live is dependent on their "ability to conceptualize alternatives" (hooks, 1990, p. 149, as quoted by Smyth, 2011, p. 107).

The development of a narrative of worth from a narrative of deficit was facilitated by UPW working as a counterspace for the participants. Having caring adult figures around them was an important factor in their growth. This is seen by them talking about UPW as a family rather than workplace (6/8), explaining that they were given high expectations by which they could grow (6/8) and having a positive adult figure and getting advice from them (6/8) or specifically a same-sex adult figure (3/8). In these, a sense of self-worth can be seen through positive attention and recognition from adults; as participation and community of others facilitate self-worth (Case & Hunter, 2012; see 3.3.2). In addition, five participants specifically described how they had difficulties finding a place after graduating from the program, which indicates that UPW was very important in their lives. UPW could think of ways to facilitate the

process of change after graduation from high school and the SLP, however it would probably need more staff and resources.

Therefore, a key factor in the development of a narrative of worth are the relationships the youth could build throughout the CYW. The youth gains power through "genuine opportunities to negotiate successfully" with the people around them (Smyth, 2011, p. 45). Youth workers were mentioned as accountability partners or otherwise important people 61 times in the interviews, in addition to people outside of UPW 2 times and other streetleaders 4 times. Seven participants either mentioned how important it was to have someone to talk to or someone to look up to, which helps the positive development of self-worth (Case & Hunter, 2012). I2 and I8 specifically mentioned that it was not the program that was important, but the people in the program who challenged them and were there for them. This is connected to Gay's (2000) statement that concern should be given towards the well-being as well as success of the youth, because these personal connections provoke action, help them achieve and be empowered.

While many of them were inspired by the program, half of the interviewees still struggled to find their place. Firstly, four interviewees were mostly in various kinds of crossroads in their lives. On the one hand, I1 was looking for a job to keep going to college and I8 was working and had dropped out of college due to financial reasons. They both described how they were not sure when they would be able to continue school or how and they stated that they felt "lost" with life. On the other hand, I2 and I5 were working steady job at the moment, but they had clear professional goals in mind. However, they did not have any specific plans of when they would be able to make them reality. Secondly, the other four interviewees had clear goals that they were currently working towards. I3 had been in college since graduation from the SLP and was working towards becoming a teacher, while I4 was working and saving money to build a house. I4 had dropped out of college after one semester, but stated that he did not regret it and was happy to have a steady job. I6 and I7 were both stay-at-home mothers with infants dependent on them,

however I6 had a clear plan of finishing her high school diploma and studying to become a registered nurse, while I7 had finished a nursing diploma and was planning to look for a job once she stopped breastfeeding.

Clausen (1986) states that "stable life patterns" develop when people find deeply satisfying activities early in life (see 3.2). All of the study participants showed that they have goals, ideas and targets that they want to pursue. However, they were not always inspired by the SLP. On the one hand, I2 and I4 stated how they want to "chase" a youth worker they had in UPW, that they admired his lifestyle with working to help the local youth and raising a family and wanted to pursue the same thing. I2 was working for another youth program and I4 was still volunteering for UPW, therefore; they had kept the activities they found satisfying in the SLP. On the other hand, I5 regarded his working experience in the SLP "just watching kids" and did not feel that it had helped him reach his goals in any way, even though he did say he was challenged to be a better leader. Therefore, it could be, that the SLP helps those to achieve stable routines or patterns in life more who actually are oriented in education, childcare or as such.

It seems that UPW as a whole worked as a counterspace for the former participants, not only the SLP. CYW as a counterspace with the presence of strategic people offering positive relationships seemed to be more significant than the SLP and its activities and requirements alone, since they valued people not in direct contact with them only in the SLP but the whole organization. The interviewees referred to the whole organization more than the SLP: while UPW was mentioned by "urban promise" or "urban" 57 times, the words "streetleader program", "streetleaders" or "streetleader" or "program" referring to the SLP were mentioned 41 times throughout the interviews. Even though the interview questions specifically referred to experiences with the SLP, many interviewees used UPW in their answers, especially I1 and I3. Worth mentioning is that also other programs such as the YMCA, CYC and Boys and Girls Club (BGC) were mentioned nine times. Therefore, UPW as an

organization, more than rather just the SLP, worked as a counterspace for the former participants during the time they were working.

Promoting social justice seemed important for five interviewees, however, only I3 and I4 had clear plans on how to do this. I1, I2 and I5 talked about their desires to be role models and examples for their community. I1 wanted to be a role model for the community where she grew up in, however, had problems with focus in her studies and had changed her major 3 times. I2 wanted to be a guidance counselor and I5 a police officer, both to improve the city and fix its problems, however were working and had no clear intentions of going to school. I3, however, was in college and had a set plan of finishing his studies and eventually becoming a principal and working towards fixing problematic educational laws that in his opinion do not serve the benefit of students. I4 was working a steady job and his primary focus was to be a good father to his son and therefore an example to his community. I3 stated that he had had this plan even before doing the SLP program, however, working for UPW had strengthened this dream. I4 had strongly been impacted by the SLP and UPW to work towards his goals. Therefore, I4 and I3 had constructed alternatives to the expectations that existed for them and they overcame them, and in this way they created a "space of refusal" to the surroundings and setbacks around them (Smyth, 2011, p. 107).

Borden et. al (2011) state that youth work's aim for young people is "overall positive development". This is both for individual as well as collective development and critical consciousness. As seen, the reasons for marginalization are social and UPW has managed to create an environment that connects the youth with each other as well as positive adult figures. Through these positive relationships, the youth has felt that they have been recognized and that they have worth. As Borden et. al (2011) found, youth programs have developed into support systems for young people, and such is the SLP as well. In the current context, the positive relationships proved to be the most valuable take-out from the program of the former participants. Therefore, it is important to intentionally develop the youth program into a meaningful environment

with relationship building rather than merely having a space for the youth to hang out. According to Oxfam's definition of capacity building (Eade, 1997, as quoted by Smyth, 2011, p. 113), the basis of development is "strengthening people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to act on these". However, I believe CYW should not only consider individual but also collective development and development towards collective interest in the promotion of social justice.

Religion had facilitated the sense of belonging in three participants' lives. One even had a negative attitude towards the religious commitment of UPW, as it in I1's opinion made non-religious people feel like outsiders. However, mostly I4 talked about religion as the most important factor of his UPW experience and explained how it completely changed his attitude towards life. In his case, the connection between religious coping and life satisfaction can be seen (Van Dyke et al., 2009) and how his social behavior changed through a religious realization (ibid; King & Furrow, 2004). I7 and I8 valued the religious orientation of the programs as they had grown up in churches and it was something familiar to them. The experience had strengthened their own religious commitment.

Most of the study participants experienced transformation in the SLP program. According to the viewpoint of the study participants, the transformation that the SLP aims for is growth of character (7/8), receiving help and care from other people and realizing that I need to help and care for other people (5/8), putting ideas into action rather than just thinking of them (4/8) and according to two participants, doing what I want and being happy. Reflecting these ideas with the findings about the narrative of worth, especially the growth of character and change in attitude is strongly connected to the UPW idea of seeing a clear, positive change in how the youth consider their own life, how they behave and what they dream about. In essence, the purpose for the youth is to be connected with self-actualization, their deepest level of needs and transcendence, so the fruit of it can be seen through them working towards the good of others as well.

Transformation in this way can most clearly be seen in I4's life. I3 already had a plan to study in college and become a teacher before the SLP and I2 was strongly influenced by the SLP but still did not have a clear plan on how to achieve his goals, years after graduation. I4 had dropped out of college, but was certain that it was not his place. He was working full-time and had split custody of his son. His goal was to keep on working full-time and save money to buy a house, eventually get married, and most of all, in all these ways be an example and a role model for his community, who thought that this young African American man could never result into anything. He was practicing what he was preaching as he knew that the youth in the neighborhoods saw what he was doing. Even another interviewee talked about him and commented "what more advice could you have" than I4's whole life. Here, being marginalized was chosen as a "site of resistance" (Smyth, 2011, p. 107).

Some downsides came up in the interviews and UPW as well as critical youth work in general should take these seriously. These comments were all isolated and there was no common theme for suggestions for improvements. However, they are still valuable comments and chances for possible change or upgrade. I3 wished for more open discussion about racial issues as majority of the streetleaders were of ethnic minorities and a majority of the staff was not. I2 felt that some streetleaders were given more attention by the staff than others and some were merely used and thrown out. I5 stated that the whole idea of the SLP as an employment program is narrow and needs to be reconsidered. There were some interviewees who would have needed more support after the program to find what to do next and to mentor them through the change. All in all, the suggestions should be considered, of course within the limits of staff and resources.

This study has shown the important viewpoint of the local youth in the current phenomena. It has been valuable to know their idea of what is wrong with the socioeconomic structures of their area and what is needed in their view to improve these and give more possibilities to young people. The youth has taken steps towards self-actualization, from deficits to worth with the strategic

presence of other people who have intentionally been a part of these young people's lives.

6.2   Limitations of the study

The number of study participants in the present thesis may seem limited. One may criticize that eight former participants of the SLP is not enough to show the whole picture of the outcome of the program. However, a qualitative research does not aim for a generalization, but a focused examination of a phenomenon, as here, to bring out the viewpoint of the participants and their experiences. In addition, a qualitative research emphasizes the data and its quality, not its quantity. This study is a good starting point for other studies researching the development of a narrative of worth through youth programs in North America.

Having gone through the process of the data collection and analysis, I see room for improvement especially in the interview. Firstly, the questions could have been more focused and suited to the topic of the thesis. In addition to having too many questions as well as unnecessary questions, the interviews often side-tracked to a topic that by itself was very interesting, however not connected or valuable to the thesis. Secondly, while going through the transcripts, I saw I could've asked more elaborating questions on topics that the interviewees introduced and were closely connected to the thesis topic. There were many occasions where an interesting topic came up and I did not take the bait. However, good quality data was collected and gladly most of the interviewees were very open to share their life stories, therefore they answered each question more broadly than asked and that contributed to the thesis findings.

As mentioned (see 4.2), qualitative research gives plenty of responsibility to the researcher. However, without thematic focus and the dynamic interviews with space and priority given for the interviewees and what they wanted to bring out, this study would have lacked the interesting quotes and stories that

the interviewees had to tell. Discussing themes such as worth and deficit, philosophical analysis must be done and no definite answers can always be given. Themes direct the discussion of the topic and qualitative research and analysis thankfully gives room and importance for them. It is the people who give meaning to things and experiences, and the interviewees also choose what they want to share and what not. However, this study has been done systematically and explicitly, which gives trustworthiness to its findings.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

The present study gives information about the importance of critical youth work in the United States. Youth work and its possibilities have been followed (McLaren, 2007; Borden et al., 2011; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013) and research shows that it has become more serious and focused (Borden et al., 2011). However, youth programs and organizations themselves need to collect data more consistently and accurately to see evidence of the impact of their program. It is especially important to see how youth work as non-formal education supports the academic achievement of students; and therefore studies should be made of how students who have low academic performance can be supported through critical youth programs. In addition, as relationship building has been found valuable (the current study; Lavie-Ajayi & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Ngai et al., 2016; McLaren, 2007; Freire, 2005), more studies should be conducted to find out what kind of methods the youth workers use and how they can act as positive role models to support the psycho-emotional well-being of the youth.

Narrative of worth is a concept that is not well-known. However, it is strongly connected to Freire's and Maslow's theories of critical consciousness and self-actualization and more studies on it should be conducted to facilitate and improve the work of youth programs in the United States. Knowing more about how a narrative of worth is developed would make youth work more focused and intentional. Studies should especially focus on how to support the

development of a narrative of worth in youth work to achieve lasting results and solutions for the youth in question, rather than just giving them a place of safety until they turn 18. Furthermore, the power of caring is a concept that calls for case studies and more practical models for the culture in the United States. Caring is a wonderful phenomenon and known from Gay's (2000) vast research, however it is also significant to come up with more practical models for how to care for young people when they are in the critical age of most needing it.

Conclusively, research on how and how much racial inequality still impacts the lives of these inner-city youth in an everyday level is needed. It is something that President Trump has commented on (see 2.1) and is visible in the media (Chan, 2016; Epstein and Bender, 2016; Reilly, 2016; Johnson, 2016; Jones, 2014). Therefore, current research from the viewpoint of the local people is needed to gain more knowledge about deficits and flaws, and to find ways to develop these and find ways to improve them. This way, more ways can be found to support any marginalized groups within the United States and especially support their de-marginalization. This study has shown a small piece of how the lives of 8 young people were empowered through youth work. An Austrian author Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach said once "in der Jugend lernt, im Alter versteht man", which is freely translated "in youth we learn, in age we understand."

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Interview 1

Plan for interview with former StreetLeaders / Questionnaire

- Master's thesis for a University in Finland, Education dept
- About how the SL program has influenced the lives of graduated or former participants
- Your name will not be used in the study
- Recording will only be listened to and transcribed by the researcher
- First you will fill out a questionnaire and after that I will ask you questions and we can discuss
- You are free to choose not to answer a question, just say no comment or I don't want to answer, that's completely fine
- I hope that you are comfortable to be honest with me of both positive and negative aspects of your experience and your life, one of the purposes of the study is to improve the program and not to provide any unreal images of Urban Promise

1. How are you different in result of the program? What would your life be like now without the SL program?

EDUCATION

1. Which schools did you go to? (When) did you finish high school?
2. Did you go to college after high school? Did you graduate / Are you going to college now?
3. If not, why not? If you dropped out, why?
4. What have been the biggest challenges for you when attending college?
5. How do you think the SL program prepared or helped you in education? Did it encourage you for further studies?
6. Do you think the SL program should do more to help the SLs go to college? If yes, what exactly?

WORK

1. Are you working? How many jobs have you had since you finished the SL program?
2. How do you think the SL program prepared you for working life?
3. The SL program is supposed to help you acquire leadership and management skills. Do you think you grew as a leader in the program? If yes, how / If not, what more could the program do?

FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

1. From birth to 18 years old, describe your family. Who raised you?

2. If there was not a mother/father around, was there any other significant male/female presence?
3. How close are you with your (family members mentioned)? How often do you meet / Do you live still in the same house with (family members mentioned)?
4. Are you married / in a relationship?
5. Who do you hang out with? Have these people changed at any point of your life and if yes, why?
6. Who would you consider the closest person to you? What is that relationship like?
7. How do you think these relationships have affected your choices with education or work? E.g. have you followed your parents in career or college choices?
8. Do you see family influence in your life as strong or weak?
9. Do you think Urban Promise or the SL program has contributed to these choices? If yes, in what ways?

FREETIME / OTHER

1. What do you like to do in your freetime? Is there something you would like to pursue but do not for some reason or the other?
2. What kind of dreams or goals do you have for your life? Has the SL program affected these and if yes, in what way? (vision)
3. The Urban Promise vision states that we want to see the youth seeking a full life. What is your idea of a "full life"?
4. Think about the standards you set on your own life. Do you think they are low or high standards or just right?

Appendix 2 Interview 2

1. Instructions / initial comments
- Master's thesis for a University in Finland, Education dept
- About how the SL program has influenced the lives of graduated or former participants
- Your name will not be used in the study
- Recording will only be listened to and transcribed by the researcher
- First you will fill out a questionnaire and after that I will ask you questions and we can discuss
- You are free to choose not to answer a question, just say no comment or I don't want to answer, that's completely fine
- I hope that you are comfortable to be honest with me of both positive and negative aspects of your experience and your life, one of the purposes of the study is to improve the program and not to provide any unreal images of Urban Promise
2. Questionnaire appr. 15-20 minutes
3. Interview appr. 20-40 minutes, questions below.
4. Tell me something about yourself and your life.
5. Tell me about your experience of the Streetleader program.
   How were the program expectations for you? (How) were you challenged?
6. Did you graduate from high school? When?
7. (How) did the SL program impact your life choices after graduation (from SL)? (How) did it encourage you to pursue higher education?
8. What has been challenging for you in life after the program? Do you think the program could have done more to help you in these issues?
9. The SL program is supposed to help you acquire leadership and management skills. Are you working / Have you worked after the SL program? How do you think the SL program prepared you for working life? Do you think you grew as a leader in the program? If yes, how / If not, what more could the program do?
10. From birth to 18 years, describe your life. Who raised you? If there was not a mother/father around, was there any other significant male/female presence?
11. How close are you with your (family members mentioned)? How often do you meet / Do you live still in the same house with (family members mentioned)?
12. Are you married / in a relationship?
13. Did you attain close relationships through the SL program with fellow SLs or staff members? Tell me about them.

14. Who do you hang out with? Has this group of people changed during your SL program

15. How have these relationships affected your life choices in education, work and relationships? Your personal view.

16. What kind of dreams or goals do you have for your life? (How) did the SL program affect these goals?

17. Think about the standards you set on your own life. Do you think they are low or high standards or just right?

18. The Urban Promise vision states that we want to see the youth transformed and seeking a full life. What is your idea of a "full life"? In what way the program reached the vision in your life or did it?

Appendix 3 Questionnaire

Questionnaire   Name: _____

                                                Date (m/d): _____ / _____

1. **Which month/year did you finish the Streetleader program?**

   _____

2. **Which Camps did you work for as a SL? Who was your director / were your directors? Who was your Team Leader / were your Team Leaders? Which year(s) did you work as a SL (e.g. 2014-15)? What's the total number of months you worked as a SL?**

   ☐ Amen, director(s): _____
      Team leader(s):_____

      Year(s):_____ Number of months: _____

   ☐ Hope, director(s): _____
      Team leader(s):_____

      Year(s):_____ Number of months: _____

   ☐ Harmony, director(s): _____
      Team leader(s):_____

      Year(s):_____Number of months: _____

   ☐ Freedom, director(s): _____
      Team leader(s):_____

      Year(s):_____ Number of months: _____

   ☐ Promise, director(s): _____
      Team leader(s):_____

      Year(s):_____ Number of months: _____

   ☐ Victory, director(s): _____
      Team leader(s):_____

      Year(s):_____Number of months: _____

3. **Were you a Camper before the Streetleader program? Which Camp and how many months / which year? Who was the Camp director?**

   ☐ Amen, director(s): _____
      Year(s): _____ Number of months: _____

☐ Hope, director(s): _____

Year(s): _____ Number of months: _____

☐ Harmony, director(s): _____

Year(s): _____ Number of months:_____

☐ Freedom, director(s): _____

Year(s): _____ Number of months: _____

☐ Promise, director(s): _____

Year(s): _____ Number of months: _____

☐ Victory, director(s): _____

Year(s): _____ Number of months: _____

4. Did you go to

☐ Urban Promise School   Graduated in _____

Additional information: _____

☐ Urban Promise Academy   Graduated in _____

Additional information: _____

5. Did you take part in (mark with X)

☐ Urban Promise Summer Camps

    ☐ as a Camper in (year) _____

    ☐ as a volunteer in (year) _____

    ☐ as an intern in (year) _____

☐ Urban Promise Internship in (year) _____

☐ Urban Promise Sports Program in (year) _____

    participated   ☐ actively ☐ casually ☐ other, please specify: ___

_____

6. Which trips did you take part in while you were a Streetleader? List 3 that influenced you the most. With a few words, write down how/why it influenced you.

a. Trip:_____ Year: _____

Director(s) who were with: _____

How it influenced me:

_____

_____

   b. Trip:_____ Year:_____

Director(s) who were with: _____

How it influenced me:

_____

_____

   c. Trip:_____ Year: _____

Director(s) who were with: _____

How it influenced me:

_____

_____

7. **On a scale of 1-10, how much needed is Urban Promise in Wilmington? Circle + give reasons.**

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Not needed   Very much needed

Reasons:

_____

_____

_____

8. **What are your 3 most important take-aways from the Streetleader program? Mark down 1, 2 and 3 (1=the most important)**

___ relationships   ___ Bible knowledge

___ work experience   ___ good memories / experiences

___ leadership skills   ___ skills to work with children/youth

___ tutoring / academic skills   ___ college trip(s)

___ mentoring / guidance with life   ___ knowledge of (write down what)

_____

___ life skills, please specify: _____

___ something else, please specify: _____

___ something else, please specify: _____

___ something else, please specify: _____

   9. Who would you say was/is the closest staff member for you and why?

_____

_____

How did they influence your life or your choices?

_____

_____

_____

How often or in what ways are you still in touch with them?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your answers!!

Appendix 4 Informed consent sheet

INFORMED CONSENT

Master's thesis "Transformation in the lives of former participants of the Streetleaders program in Wilmington, Delaware"

This is to confirm that I willingly agree to participate in a study carried out by Suvi Muikku, Master's degree student of the University of Jyvaskyla, Finland. Suvi Muikku has provided me with all the information that I have requested in order to make the voluntary decision to participate in an interview. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study at any point. I give my permission for the interview information to be used in research and reporting anonymously without any identifying information.

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Date _____

Name and signature of the participant

_____

_____

Date _____

Name and signature of the researcher

_____

_____